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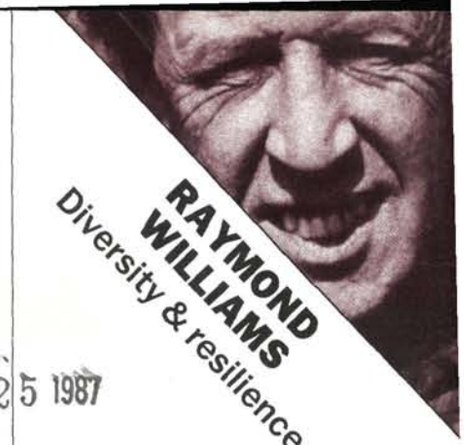

RAYMOND WILLIAMS
Diversity & resilience

SEP 25 1987

South Africa's middle ground

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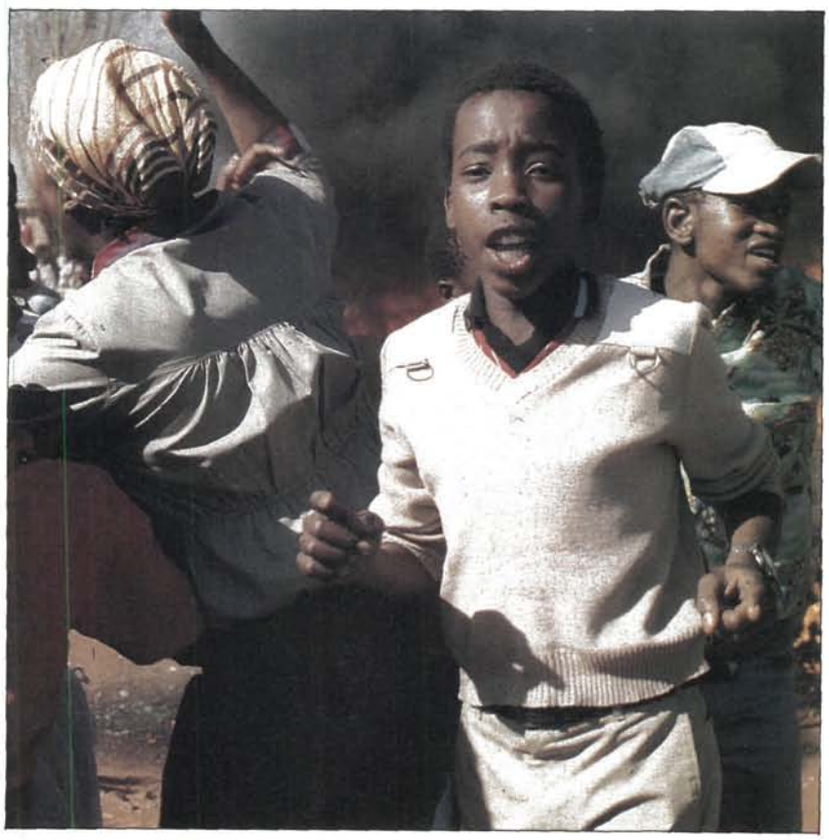

'Southern Africa will be a wasteland filled with refugees and corpses to be inherited by whoever is still around to take over' **Phillip van Niekerk**

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A sample of former detainees aged 11-18 were questioned by women representing 14 voluntary organisations. Of the 40 children, no fewer than 24 had been kicked, punched, caned, slapped or sjambokked. Eight had been forced to exercise for long periods and beaten for showing tiredness.

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NEW STATESMAN

Vol 114 No 2941 7 August 1987

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The official Audit Bureau of Circulation figures for *NS* sales in the six months January-June 1987 show a weekly average of 29,442 copies sold each week — up 14 per cent on the previous six months.

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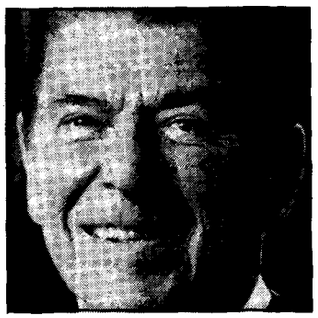
A President unfrocked



FORMER US President Jimmy Carter was much abused by intellectuals of the right for misunderstanding, or being unable to enact, one of the central mysteries of the presidency: the religious function. A President, it was said, was something of the high priest to the nation, officiating over its major events, laying balm on its most notable troubles. Ronald Reagan, they said, was the man with these qualities; a man able to express the nation's essence, its soul, better than any other.

We can see that there is something in this, while not liking the fact of it. For most, politics *is* a mystery (they are usually encouraged to believe so), and its most mystifying elements — national greatness and mission — are precisely those which a skilled politician can most profitably play on. Carter, a rational and hardworking President, tried to compensate for his distaste for chauvinistic gestures by projecting a soupy image of 'concern' and 'love': it lost out to the charge that he was soft on the Soviets and had presided over a bungled attempt to release US hostages from Iran.

President Reagan *was* able to play to that gallery; indeed, he was probably unable to do anything else. Much of his adult life had been a preparation for giving a facile defence of freedom, an impression of willingness to send in the Marines, and a skilful transformation of much of the world into a subversive conspiracy. This act, coupled with a domestic boom and fall in unemployment which his massive arms build-up helped to cause, secured him a place as the President who always said what most wanted him to say, and who said it with practised style. It was enough.

The Iran-*contra* hearings, which closed in Washington early this week, have destroyed all of that forever. The hearings established two main issues: that President Reagan actively pursued the policy of selling arms to Iran; and that his senior and most trusted aides diverted some of the monies received for these arms to the *contra* forces in Nicaragua, doing so in the sincere belief that he would have approved of these actions.

Ronald Reagan built up his following, in part, on his willingness to describe fellow national leaders as unhinged. No need to understand any more about these fellows like Gadafy or Khomeini than you see on the nightly bulletins: fact is, they're crazy and bad, take it from me. US power was to be put at the service of stopping the terrorism and anarchy which they subsidised and exported; in such a war there would be sacrifices, but no quarter.

It is to just such a crazy and bad regime that Reagan exported arms, denying he was doing so until he could deny it no longer. He unlawfully prevented the Congress from knowing of his action — showing (as Senator Daniel Inouye, who chaired the hearings, said on Monday) a 'chilling' disregard for the rule of law.

It is less clear, from the confused and bombastic testimony given by Admiral John Poindexter and Colonel Oliver North, whether or not the President knew of the diversion of funds to the *contras*. They say he did not. But they also say they acted in the belief that had he known, he would have approved; and we can take it from his own pronouncement that that is so. In acting thus in his name, they have flouted the express will of the Congress by funding the political and military descendants of a bloody tyranny which was Somoza's rule in Nicaragua.

This is not a matter of confusion between the National Security Council and the State Department, or within the NSC itself; not a matter of a dozy President and hyperactive aides. It is not even, as Senator Warren Redman, vice-chairman of the hearings panel, said, a matter of being unable to 'promote democracy abroad while undermining it at home'. It is a matter of suppressing democracy and disclosure at home in order to suppress at least the hope of it in Nicaragua.

It is this which the courtly, priestly gestures of the Reagan presidency have disguised. This is the substance below the style: a substance contemptuous of the system and the values in whose name the Reaganite crusade took life. It reduces concepts which have, or should have, practical meaning — political pluralism, freedom of expression, the rights of elected governments at home and abroad — to the status of cue cards, helpful for a broadcast but discarded and meaningless within seconds.

For all of Mrs Thatcher's shrill efforts to maintain that the US presidency still commands the moral leadership of the world, it is clear it has forfeited precisely that. That is dangerous — particularly so if it prevents the US from doing deals with the Soviet Union in the arms talks in Geneva. It is good to see the narrow celluloid patriotism of the Reaganites crumble and be exposed; but their fall could bring the roof down with it. If Secretary of State George Shultz is to justify his thrice-taken decision not to resign, it is incumbent on him to pull an intermediate-range missiles agreement out of the fire his President has lit.

John Lloyd

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DIARY

Barnsley

I am afraid that I must continue to be anonymous. Just writing this makes me a participant in the 'black economy'. What is long-term unemployment really like? Hands up those who think they know. What is the black economy? . . . You are, sir? Professor of Economics from *which* university? Ah, yes, Liverpool.

Unemployment has attracted more fishermen's tales than fishing. The public bar is a rich source of the sort of drivel which the *credulati* of Liverpool find so plausible. One is told, often by utterly well-meaning friends and acquaintances, that there is 'good money', usually 'cash in hand', to be had from such-and-such an undertaking at such-and-such a venue. I have stood in boots and overalls trying to pick up this manna from heaven. I have never made a brass farthing from such forays.

Of course there is a black economy. But you need an appropriate *skill* to participate. If you want your central heating fixed or your drive re-tarred, you don't come to the likes of *me*. You find someone already in that line of employment who will do the job on the cheap because they are defrauding the Inland Revenue and probably also their boss. We unemployed can't compete with these people.

○

The Chesterfield by-pass is etched upon my memory. There had been a public bar rumour to the effect that there was 'work going' on the famous by-pass. I was roped in not because I seemed to be one of nature's born by-pass builders, but because I owned a 30cwt motor caravan in which three or four of us could live during a summer of gainful employment.

We assembled at dawn. After hours of hard driving we arrived at the site office to be told that the man we wanted was 'Mick'. Was he to hand? Certainly not! We were waved imperiously towards a nearby boozer.

I had taken it upon myself, as the spieler of the team, to cut the mustard with this quaint character. But it seemed that I was neither Irish nor a Roman Catholic. I assured Mick that I was prepared to negotiate. Roman Catholicism we were all prepared to consider. Our lack of Irishness was something which, among gentlemen, could surely be overlooked.

We were shown the door. Mick struck me as not a man to be in two minds so we went quietly. This tribal approach to hiring labour is, I suppose, an amateur form of trade unionism. It was certainly colonialism turned on its head. Nobody said very much on the way home.

○

The people who complain that there are shortages of this or that sort of labour while three million of us are sitting on our backsides simply overlook the fact that, in the eye of putative employers, workers are not interchangeable.

There *is* a semi-professional sort of fiddler. These men (they usually are men) are made an offer by their employer who is almost always operating on the margins of the economy. He and they conspire together so that he 'lays them off'. He supplies them with P45s and off they go and sign on. They are back at work on Monday morning, at a sharply reduced rate of gross pay, but with the advantages of paying no tax or National Insurance contributions. And they also draw the dole. If they sign on at different offices (it depends where one lives), the dangers are small. Such employment is unpredictable, anyway, so by the time anyone smells a rat — if they ever do — these chaps will have moved on. And what checks there are are easily circumvented. One is forbidden to sign on between the hours of noon and 2pm. But a co-operative employer will let them sign on at their convenience. These blokes are frequently to be met in the pubs nearest the DHSS offices. It actually *helps* to sign on smelling of beer!

So the unemployment figures are inflated by such people, are they? I doubt it. For every man in the sort of trade which is mobile, temporary and open to seasonal opportunities for the same work somewhere else, there are a hundred women who do not feature on the register at all. They are former teachers, former nurses, former secretaries. As housewives and mums they do not begin to meet the criteria of 'unemployed and in receipt of benefit'. But they are unemployed. If the work was there, they'd take it.

And the rest of us men are not much better off. To be classed as not-even-in-the-black-economy, is to be somewhat less than a man. Surely you can rake up *something*? I've tried! But there is nothing more pathetic than someone who once sold his brain caught trying to sell his hands.

○

There is another group who are on the dole but who are objectively self-employed. It isn't a large group because the skills involved usually guarantee steady employment. It is where unemployment is 'structural' in such places as Sheffield and parts of Birmingham, where the manufacturing base has been wiped out, that a Third World style of make-do-and-mend backyard bodging is developing. What hits the unemployed hardest is when something expensive, bought when times were good, suddenly goes on the blink. There is no question of HP for the jobless; and banks, like employers, are only really interested in people who don't need them. So you employ a bodger for anything from central heating systems through electrical goods to cars.

So why don't these people simply declare themselves to be self-employed and take a weight off Lord Young's mind? Three reasons: the MSC reckons that one third of one-person businesses go to the wall within three years, a figure widely regarded as absurdly optimistic; the National Insurance position of the self-employed is akin to theft in that they pay both employee's and employer's contributions and get nothing for them except the basic old age pension; and self-employment is a one-way ticket off the dole, there being no way back if it all goes wrong. No wonder the government encourages it!

The self-employed don't qualify for the dole, so they are not 'unemployed and in receipt of benefit'. Having been fleeced for years by the National Insurance system they are, in effect, told they don't exist. It happened to my father; it isn't going to happen to me. Here's an interesting statistic (Office of Population Censuses and Surveys): the four highest categories of suicides, broken down into occupational groups, are small businessmen, doctors, dentists and farmers — all self-employed. It can seriously damage your health. It killed my father at 54. Lord Young can go on frowning as far as I'm concerned.

○

It would take a long time to explain what long-term unemployment does to people. How, regardless of background, one loses the full force of one's citizenship; how one becomes the career material for an entire industry with a vested interest in ensuring that we remain a 'problem'; how one comes into collision with the law, both civil and criminal, by a sort of automatic process, and how *Jarndyce v Jarndyce* is still with us; how children, as in the Third World, are now a source of wealth; and how one joins a social class into which one was not born, and joins it in the very British way: by *invitation*. Well, thas it, innit?

'Statistic'

ROGER WODDIS

The Doctor

The result of the SDP's ballot on merger with the Liberals follows three days after the centenary of the birth of Rupert Brooke

If I should lose, think only this of me:
  That there's some lesion, when the wound has healed,
That is for ever bleeding. There shall be
  In years to come a larger lust revealed;
A lust to lead that overrides despair,
  Though it makes Roy and Bill and Shirley foam
And even drives boy David to declare
  That Number Ten is not my natural home.

To think that I will simply sail away,
  If all those merger maniacs say 'Yes',
    Is to believe there is no God in heaven.
Whatever friends and foes alike may say,
  Unmindful of the ego I possess,
    I'm damned if I'll just be our man in Devon.

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Union leaders back profit-making

COMPANY PROFITS are as important to union leaders as jobs, according to a MORI opinion poll reported here exclusively for the *New Statesman*. As the trade union movement prepares to meet in Blackpool for its annual Congress next month, the soul-searching and questioning of future direction gather pace.

Unemployment and anti-union legislation are the two main issues which trade union leaders think are facing unions in general at present. As the table shows, these two issues even come ahead of the decline in union membership, followed by hostile government attitudes, the decline of manufacturing industry, and generally being considered less effective as a movement on issues of perceived importance. One in five cite the need for the movement to improve its image.

The problems unions face

What would you say are the three or four main issues facing the trade union movement in general at the present time?

Unemployment/potential redundancies	66%
Anti-union legislation	61%
Loss of membership	44%
Hostile government attitude	27%
Declining manufacturing industry	23%
Having reduced power/being less effective	23%
Improving its image	20%
Financial problems/low subscriptions/ sequestration of assets	18%
Economic situation generally/economic issues	17%
Government intereference in wage conditions/ wage policies	13%
Problems of adapting to new technology	13%
Inability to respond constructively to new situations	10%

(Excludes answers of less than 10 per cent)

The issues thought of as facing their own union reflect those facing the wider union movement. Unemployment, anti-union legislation and loss of members are again the top three issues, followed by securing pay increases for members. Adjusting to new technology is felt to be important by around one in four (23 per cent). In MORI's 1977 survey of trade union leaders we found much greater concern among general secretaries about improving pay (was 67 per cent, is now 25 per cent), but lower concern about unemployment, loss of membership and hostile government attitudes. How things have changed since the heyday of Jack Jones and Hugh Scanlon! Unemployment is no longer the overwhelming dominant concern for their own union that it was in 1981 when two in three singled it out — now half as many do.

An issue which splits union leaders down the middle is the trade-off between a company's financial performance and its role as an employer. Forty-eight per cent agree that 'the main responsibility of companies is to perform profitably, even if this means reducing the number of people they employ', while almost as many (45 per cent) disagree with this view.

Much has been said recently about the need for unions to communicate more effectively with their members. The survey found that six in ten union leaders (62 per cent) believe that communications between individual unions and their members are good, with blue collar union leaders more inclined to say this than are leaders of white collar or mixed unions. However, over a third (37 per cent) believe communications are not good; these people recommend that there be more communication direct to members' homes, and that information should be made more attractive to read. They also suggest more direct contact between officials and members.

The mood of 'new realism' is apparent in attitudes to union and work practices. In principle three in four union leaders favour pre-strike ballots (77 per cent), political party affiliation (72 per cent) and productivity agreements (75 per cent). The majority also support in principle the closed shop (58 per cent), company profit sharing for all employees (61 per cent), employee shareholdings (56 per cent) and unionisation of the unemployed (also 56 per cent). By a margin of a little over two to one they oppose 'opting in' to the political levy (25 per cent support, 59 per cent oppose), while just eight per cent support no-strike agreements (83 per cent oppose). Supporters of the pre-strike secret ballot are split between those who believe the union and those who say the government should pay for such a ballot.

Comparing current attitudes to industry with those expressed in previous MORI surveys reveals a high degree of consistency over the past decade. One exception to this is the sharp drop in the proportion of general secretaries who believe that 'company profits in Britain are not high enough'. Only one in five (19 per cent) now agree with this view, compared with three in five (58 per cent) who did so in 1981, presumably because of the big rise in company profits. There has also been a fall over the same period in the proportion who believe that 'by and large, trade unions have too little control over the actions of their members' (24 per cent now agree, a 12-point decline since 1981).

On most questions there are also only minor differences between the views of leaders of large, small, blue-collar and white-collar unions.

How do union leaders see the future role of trade unions? The five main changes foreseen relate to the provision of more extensive services for members, becoming more professional, becoming stronger, amalgamating to form fewer but larger unions and improving their communications with members leading to unions becoming more responsive to their members. One general secretary said: 'The days of trade union bosses are on the wane'. More than one referred to 'the American model'.

Perceptions of their future role have changed considerably over the past decade.

Future role of trade unions

%	1977	1979	1981	1987
Fewer/amalgamated unions	49	36	35	20
Extension of union services	16	11	22	30
Closer liaison with government	34	15	27	10
Closer liaison with management	47	17	20	1

Another angle on the future is revealed by answers to the question: 'Who do you think is the most impressive trade union official in Britain?' John Edmonds of the GMB (General, Municipal and Boilermakers' Union) topped the poll, with Rodney Bickerstaffe of NUPE (public employees) the runner-up. Some way behind, Eric Hammond (electricians), Gavin Laird (engineers) and Norman Willis (TUC) tie, one ahead of Ken Gill (TASS white-collar workers) and Ron Todd (transport and general workers), who are two ahead of Brenda Dean (SOGAT printers) and Clive Jenkins (ASTMS white-collar workers).

The criteria given by respondents for their choice focus on recognising the need for change; realism; intellectual ability; good public presence; doing a good job for members; and being in touch with members. Perhaps most telling is the fact that one in seven replied 'Nobody'.

Brian Gosschalk

The findings are based on 71 interviews conducted in February and March this year, 52 with general secretaries, seven with their deputies and 12 with other members of the TUC General Council. The sample is representative of all TUC-affiliated unions in size and industrial sector. The MORI series has been running for 10 years.

Means and ends in New Zealand

Writing a week before New Zealand's Labour government faces the electorate, Jack Vowles disagrees with Austin Mitchell's assessment (NS 3 July) of its record

AS CHAIR of the Fabian Society, Austin Mitchell is presumably a person whose views are of some weight on the British left.

He admits that the economic record of the government is mixed. He notes the similarities of

its policies to Thatcherism; he fails to note the parallels with the sort of positions promoted by Dr David Owen and the British SDP. He also fails to establish that the diversification of the economy started before 1984. He fails to appreciate that the diversification has been slowed if not halted by the economic effects of the government's monetarism. The floating exchange rate has risen to a level comparable to that before devaluation, and, with it, interest rates. Inflation has just reached an all-time New Zealand record. The economy, under a burden of massive debt, is fragile. The goverment claims the wider benefits will emerge in another two or three years in the form of lower inflation. But at what cost by way of

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increased unemployment?

He claims that the New Zealand Labour Party now has 'a new confidence and vigour'. But, sadly, the party now has only a quarter the number of members it reported before 1984. At around 20,000 (some say fewer) this is not much above the previous nadir of 14,000 in 1975. Moreover, the party that remains shows increasing tendencies toward factionalisation, although formal factions do not yet exist as they do in the British and Australian parties.

The right wing, based in the Cabinet and the parliamentary party with the support of perhaps as many as a third of members, may express confidence and vigour. But the key group controlling the party organisation, the centre-left, presents a grimmer face. Its balancing act of 'constructive engagement' with the government has paid off in foreign policy and in staving off the worst possibilites of labour market deregulation. It is now preparing to defend what remains of the welfare state from the intensifying attacks of big business and the Treasury. Meanwhile a group initially calling itself the 'broad left' — which is actually neither — is forming the beginnings of a faction which seeks, without sign of much fresh thinking, to return to 1930s- and 1940s-style labourism and social democracy.

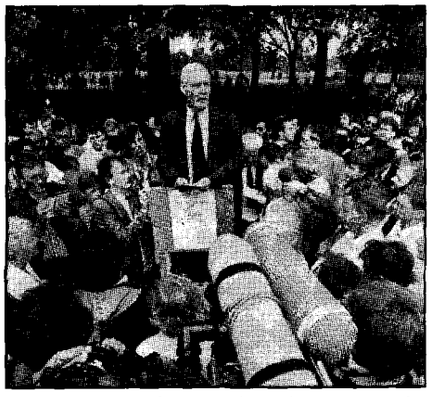
It does not bode well for the British left if others accept Austin Mitchell's repetition of the official government line in New Zealand: 'Socialism is not now about means but ends: the better pluralistic and dynamic society based on growth and full employment.' Socialism is no longer even about equality, but instead full employment. Not even the latter is likely with continued monetarist policies. William Morris used to accuse the Fabians of concentrating on means to the exclusion of ends. What New Zealand should tell British socialists is that the opposite error can be as fatal. Anyone who really thinks that means and ends can be so distinct to allow them to embrace policies which increase inequality and unemployment, promote the interests of big business and set aside those of working people, all in the name of socialism, is being badly misled.

Jack Vowles

Dr Jack Vowles teaches in the political studies department of the University of Auckland.

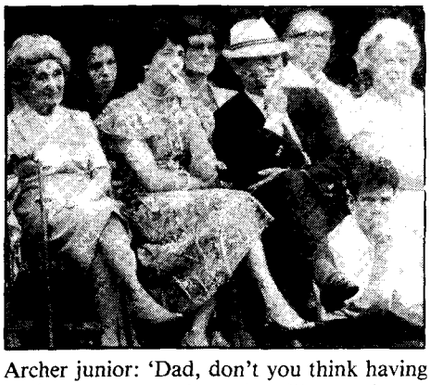
If the caption fits

No 29



You too can cock a snook at the Law Lords. Send in your captions, affidavits and writs for this picture of Tony Benn reading out the naughty bits of *S*y*a*c*e** on Speakers' Corner by Monday 17 August. Ten-pound book token to be won, to be spent on books approved by HM judges.

No 27: winner



Archer junior: 'Dad, don't you think having nuclear weapons is a bit like paying a prostitute? Who in their right mind would pay for one if they'd never contemplate using one?' Jeffrey: 'Shut up and watch the cricket.' (*Mick O'Sullivan, Bristol.*) Hon. mensh for: Jeffrey (thinks): 'I wonder what she *would* have been like?' (*George Cowley, Worcester.*)

The possibly positive party

THE THREE New Democratic Party by-election victories on 21 July have worried Canada's two dominant political parties, the Conservatives and the Liberals. Tory minister John Crosbie warned before polling day that a social cataclysm would result from an electoral victory by the 'sad sacks of socialism'. In an equally brilliant display of alliteration, he continued his dark predictions of what would happen if 'the nattering nabobs of negativism' were victorious in the St John's, Newfoundland, by-election. The Tories' hopes were centred in this Atlantic town but, as in the two other by-elections in the Yukon and in southern Ontario, the left-of-centre New Democratic Party (NDP) took the seat.

If there was one riding (constituency) the Tories should have won it was St John's East. In the last election they had 78 per cent of the vote, making it one of the safest seats in the country. The Tories had made a mammoth effort in the riding and, in a blatant example of porkbarrel politics, handed out millions of federal dollars for local projects on the eve of the by-election. But, as one pundit said, 'the Prime Minister is as popular here as diseased cod' and the shower of cheques came too late. Fishing figured in the electorate's decision to dump the Tories. Voters were angry over the government's decision to give France and other European countries what they see as excessive fishing rights near Newfoundland coastal waters. And though the riding of St John's East has the highest family income in Newfoundland, the region is still in the grip of recession, with the unemployment figure at an alarming 20 per cent. The NDP winner is Jack Harris, a 38-year-old labour lawyer with a masters' degree from the London School of Economics. He's only the second federal NDP MP from Newfoundland since the province joined Confederation in 1940.

The NDP victories have come as a big surprise to Canadian politicians. The ruling Conservatives under Prime Minister Brian Mulroney now hold 208 seats in the House of Commons, the Liberals 40 and the NDP 33. The NDP, founded in 1961 from an alliance of labour organisations in Eastern Canada with the old prairie-based Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, has never been able to convert its occasional leading position in the opinion polls into votes. Though the New Democrats have formed governments in three provinces, power in Ottawa has alternated between the Conservatives and the Liberals since Canada became a Dominion 120 years ago. In the 1984 election, the NDP got only 19 per cent of the poll.

While by-elections usually go against the government of the day and one must be sceptical of them as a portent of national elections, these by-elections confirm the rise of the NDP from its position as lowly third-runner to at least a possible contender for power. The three by-elections gave the NDP candidates an overall vote of 45 per cent, compared with 25 per cent for the Liberals and 26 per cent for the Conservatives, a reflection of their showing in recent opinion polls.

Mulroney's administration has been tarnished with a string of conflict-of-interest scandals, ministerial resignations and unabashed patronage. He has, or in other instances has tried, to cut social programmes which has caused discontent. Many Canadians are opposed to the government's willingness to open the Canadian-American border to 'free trade'.

The Liberal Party suffered even more as attention really focused on whether the electorate would turn to the Liberals or to the NDP to express rejection of Mulroney. The official opposition is seen as faction-ridden and ineffectual. The leader John Turner, in particular, is viewed by many as unprincipled, lacklustre and ambitious.

The surge in popularity nationally of the NDP has something to do with the new-found appeal of the NDP leader, Ed Broadbent, the Oshawa-born son of a General Motors clerk who taught political philosophy before being elected MP in 1968. Recent personality polls have been consistent with party polls: Broadbent comes way ahead as the party leader people think would make the best prime minister. But Broadbent has been party leader for 12 years and this is not the first time he has topped the opinion polls.

With the surge of popularity for the NDP, the standard and predictable warnings from the right are emerging. Two issues predominate: the economy and defence. On the economic front the party is condemned as being a obstacle to change, competition and freedom; that it will cause runaway inflation, public sector debt, capital flight and the devaluation of the dollar.

The New Democrats are economic nationalists, committed to strict limitation of foreign investments, exchange controls and the public sector. But those commentators who point to the NDP's commitment to state takeovers in energy, mining, manufacturing and 'at least one bank' might examine more closely the direction of the party's internal discussion, increasingly

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dominated by the 'pragmatists'. Moreover, as Broadbent himself puts it, the NDP record at the provincial level in Saskatchewan, Manitoba and British Columbia is hardly that of the vanguards of socialism. While some policies, such as a strong benefits programme, are sacrosanct, it is very likely that to gain votes some of the more radical measures will be ditched. The resolution calling for the nationalisation of one of the major banks, remains. But at the party's biennial convention last March an amendment calling for the nationalisation of five major chartered banks was overwhelmingly defeated.

Perhaps most controversial is the party's defence policy. The 1987 NDP convention renewed a call for the 'withdrawal from NATO and other military alliances' (that is NORAD — the North American Aerospace Defence Command). It also called for an 'immediate moratorium' on visits to Canadian ports by vessels that are nuclear-powered or nuclear-armed.

After the by-elections Broadbent reiterated the party's commitment to pull Canada out of NATO. However, the NDP is acutely conscious of its vulnerability to the charge that to be anti-NATO is to be opposed to the defence of Canada. So Broadbent said that, given that the countries of Europe are now able to defend themselves, Canada should spend its resources on defending *itself*, particularly in the North. An NDP government would *increase* the defence budget but money would be spent on continental North America.

If the NDP can maintain its momentum through to the next federal election, pressure at home and from the southern neighbour will grow. At present most Canadians oppose moves to withdraw from NATO.

The party has a daunting task ahead. Though admittedly made up of bright men and women, Broadbent's shadow cabinet is inexperienced; none of the 30 members has served in either a federal or provincial cabinet. Overtures are being made to those with experience in provincial NDP governments and efforts are being made to field new candidates, recruit organisers and fundraisers. The party's lack of experience is in some ways a point in its favour: it is not tainted by long years of compromise in government.

A minority NDP government is a firm possibility, but its fragile popularity is acknowledged. Former executive director Gerry Caplan admits that 'the major cause of its growth is negative. Should the other two parties find a way to establish themselves solidly in the public mind, the NDP could be the big loser.'

Anne Koch

Behind the lace curtains

Ruth Lister, who leaves the Child Poverty Action Group after eight years as its director, reflects on the 'poverty lobby'

HOW MANY people remember the Social Security (No 2) Act 1980? Announced without warning at the time of the 1980 Budget (which also cut child benefit), it marked a watershed in the politics of social security. For the first time since the war, a government was prepared deliberately and openly to cut the real value of social security benefits.

The ease with which the government got away with such a harmful piece of legislation made this one of the most profoundly depressing moments in all my time with the Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG). The clear lesson seemed to be that social security was fair game for the Chancellor's axe in his crusade to reduce public spending.

Yet, oddly, it did not turn out quite like that. Each autumn the newspapers were full of the further cuts in benefit rates that the Treasury was seeking. But, by and large, they did not materialise — and some of the 1980 cuts were made good in the 1983 election year. This is not to say that there were no more social security cuts. But they were no longer the full frontal cuts in the real value of benefits of 1980 (until child benefit was cut again in 1985). Instead there has been a steady war of attrition, often involving bits of the system with complicated names of which it has been even harder to mobilise effective defence.

In the event, perhaps the most damaging legacy of 1980 has been the insidious impact it has had on our expectations. After a few years of the politics of the 'finger in the dyke', it is all too easy to become pathetically grateful when a further benefit cut is averted. It left people like me working flat-out to defend a benefit system that we had spent the previous decade arguing was, in many ways, indefensible.

The Fowler Review presented the 'poverty lobby' with its biggest challenge in recent years. It was not just a question of publicising the damaging implications of the specific proposals put forward in the Green Paper, but also of trying to pre-empt it by challenging the review's underlying philosophy and assumptions. Central to the debate was the contention that social security expenditure had to be contained and 'targeted' on those in greatest need.

It gradually became clear that the government was not winning the argument on its proposals. An analysis of 60 organisations' responses to the Green Paper, carried out by CPAG, revealed only the Institute of Directors and the Monday Club in broad support. It is difficult to believe that this is what Norman Fowler had in mind when he spoke of carrying 'the great bulk of commonsense opinion with us'. Local campaigns mushroomed; at national level voluntary organisations, local authority associations and a coalition of trade unions joined forces in an unprecedented exercise of joint lobbying through what became known as the Social Security Consortium.

And yet, what did we achieve? The honest answer has to be precious little (apart from a sense of moral victory). The one important issue on which ministers were forced to back down — it *was* one dear to their hearts — was that of the payment of family credit (the new means-tested benefit in place of family income supplement) through the pay packet. CPAG was able to stitch together an unholy alliance of anti-poverty and women's

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groups on the one hand and small business organisations on the other, which ensured its payment direct to mothers. Otherwise, a series of defeats in the Lords was swiftly overturned with unsatisfactory compromises. The one positive insertion into the Bill — the extension of the invalid care allowance to married women — was the only other real achievement, courtesy of the European Court.

The odds against achieving significant concessions were always stacked against us given the government's majority. A fundamental weakness lay in the gap between the active local campaigning and the parliamentary lobbying. Even sympathetic Tory MPs would observe that they had not received much mail on the issue from constituents. Contrast this with the bulging post bags on Sunday trading or animal rights.

More fundamentally, despite our attempts to get across the message that the future of the social security system is an issue that concerns us all, the fact is that much of this Act *does* primarily affect only poor people in receipt of means-tested benefits. They are not, by and large, people who write letters to MPs.

One of the main lessons that CPAG has learned in recent years is that we have to try to talk to a wider audience than just Westminster and Whitehall and to work with as many different groups as we can.

The first task has been to try to convince people of the need and case for change. This was a major objective of our Divided Britain campaign, launched last year with considerable local authority support, to highlight the growing divide between the 'haves' and 'have nots'. It's been given new impetus by the post-election analyses, although there are dangers in allowing the visible geographical divide to blind people to more fundamental, if less visible, socio-economic inequalities. As a recent letter to the *Sunday Times* put it, 'poverty does not flaunt itself like wealth. It hides behind lace curtains and licks its wounds in private.'

Despite the election result, one of the most encouraging developments in the 1980s has been a clear shift in public opinion away from the punitive, anti-claimant attitudes of the late 1970s. This is not to say that there is still not considerable ambivalence in people's attitudes to claimants and poverty. But it is easier to identify a sympathetic seam and to appeal to that. Like the politicians, we too are having to discuss how we best couch that appeal. Do we enlist the support of 'comfortable Britain' on the basis of altruism or enlightened self-interest? And how do we involve poor people themselves, especially when many understandably do not want to wear the label of poverty? Rather than simply dwell upon the evils of poverty (and how is that best conveyed to get across the concept of exclusion from society as well as the more extreme manifestations of want?) we must also develop a positive case for a fairer society.

A pressure group like CPAG can only be a small voice in the process of achieving a society from which no one is excluded by dint of poverty. To leave the war against poverty and injustice to the 'experts' is to abdicate a responsibility which lies with everyone who believes in that fairer society.

Ruth Lister

Ruth Lister will be Professor of Applied Social Policy at Bradford University from next academic term.

PARLIAMENTARY SKETCH

Who goes home?

Edward Pearce

THERE IS no parliament to write about, which is professionally annoying to me. But more important there is no parliament to debate the Wright case, the events in the Gulf or anything else.

Now it is not necessary to go all the way with Michael Foot whose devotion to the Chamber of the House is such that, confronted with the Day of Judgement, he would almost certainly demand an emergency debate. It *is* to the point that the Commons rose in late July and will not return until the last week of October. It's a long long time from July to October, much too long for any constitutional assembly to stay away. The contrast with the United States is painful. The US Congress has not yet risen. It is expected to do so in the second week of August and to return by Labour Day early in the second half of September. But then Congress is a real parliament with real powers of legislation, investigation, rejection, amendment and impeachment. It does not stand there waiting for Tristan Garel-Jones to say 'You go through the door' and tick it off on a list.

The deep, post-concussive slumbers of the British assembly from high summer through to the late autumn are elegant evidence of inconsequence. That which is dispensable is dispensed with.

I recall much whingeing (sorry about this) from Scottish members in earlier years that because of the earlier Scottish school holidays they were unable to see much of their children when the House, as happened then, was sitting as late as 10 August ('Disgrrracefu' Mr Speaker'). Resisting the temptation to ask who wants to spend much time with the children of a Scottish MP anyway, one can only observe that these complainants now have their way, as does every idle or money-making MP to the point where school holidays seem curtailed and only the universities can offer serious competition in the business of conspicuous vacation.

It is not that one objects to MPs enjoying themselves or indeed when on holiday doing nothing at all. A good friend of mine, a Conservative MP, once defined happiness as standing in five feet of water in a Portuguese swimming pool having his gin and tonic replenished, which beats Sydney Smith and Dr Johnson (eating foie gras to the sound of trumpets and driving briskly in a post chaise with a pretty woman). MPs are welcome to all three diversions which will make them better people.

The trouble is the three months. The trouble is not that they are enjoying themselves, but that so is the executive which does *not* take long holidays. Happily, the Prime Minister in an access of wisdom did not send minesweepers to the Gulf. But if she had, who would have raised the matter and registered opposition?

We have in the Commons committee procedures which from a legislative point of view are a disgrace. Everyone knows roughly what is the allocation of hours before a guillotine is triggered. Opposition members on a committee will make a tremendous fuss, yet all but the least sophisticated will also know that their own side will have offered a deadline. They also know that government members of the committee have been told to shut up while the Opposition performs its therapeutic exercises. Accordingly the whips will return the legislation in a neat little bundle on an appointed day. That bill will have been examined in its and bits, capriciously and haphazardly. The rationale for such *pro forma* law-making is the shadow of the guillotine, in turn justified by the 'pressure of parliamentary time'. The is no pressure of parliamentary time. If the House sat as long as Congress there would be another six weeks for careful examination of bills.

BUT OUR SYSTEM is geared to *not* examining bills carefully. Just as it is concerned that backbenchers shall not complicate life for the executive. The most damning fact of parliament's sweet anaesthesia is that the Library ceases to function and with it the source of most parliamentary research for the asking of difficult questions. With the judiciary currently fulfilling the role of chief lion under the throne (or in more modern terms, as the executive's Doberman), we need all the difficult questions we can get. But the entire system of the supposedly checking, allegedly balancing, nominally legislating part of the constitution has been put on 'Hold'. There is uninterrupted executive government, give or take Mrs Thatcher's fretful fortnight in the Alps, and nobody is around to make a constitutional mousesqueak.

In an idler administration it would matter less. When Harold Macmillan was touring the great houses, and getting in training by a course of rigorous inertia for a condition of unflappability in crisis, Members of Parliament might feel privately guilty at their inactivity but at least they were in sync with the Cabinet. Mrs Thatcher by contrast combines the work ethic of John Wesley with the despotic propensities of Lord Sidmouth. For parliament to lounge during her hortatory, bullying and peremptory reign is a neglect of duty.

The tragedy of our parliament is that it is in a state of dilapidation. The backbench MP diminishes under a strong central government which for our purposes means prime minister plus civil service plus selected ministers. The feeling is very strong that the backbenches are a wilderness to be traversed, not hills to be occupied by sharpshooters. Apathy in Opposition and servility among government supporters combine to create a situation where parliament can go away for a quarter of a year at a single stretch and not be missed.

Why so short a time at such expense? After all, it isn't necessary to get all our ideas from the Americans with their exaggerated respect via Jefferson and Montesquieu for the balance of powers and restraint on rulers. Perhaps we should learn from Argentina where even under the democratic constitution most laws pass by decree and El Congresso meets once a week, every Wednesday. □

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BRIAN WILSON

The Livingstone/Dalyell litmus test of socialist purity

ELEVEN long weeks ago, we stood on the verge of the general election campaign. The winning of votes was on every Labour Party member's mind, and Ken Livingstone was no exception. The votes which preoccupied him, however, were the ones he requires to gain membership of the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party.

With the gift of a column in *Tribune* on 14 May, several days after Mrs Thatcher had announced that there was to be a general election on 11 June, Livingstone used it with characteristic generosity of spirit to advance his own interests. The general election was scarcely mentioned. Thatcher might as well not have existed. Miss Harriet Crawley, who was shortly to succeed in reducing Brent East to the status of Labour marginal, was not the target in the Livingstone sights.

'This year,' he announced to an anxious movement, 'my constituency party agreed that I should stand against Tam Dalyell . . .' I thought of writing to *Tribune* at the time to express astonishment that any Labour candidate should be concerned with such internal nonsense at that particular juncture, but decided that it was pointless to pursue the absurdity. However, the cliques and caucuses have been hard at work in the interim and last week I was reminded of the article when the Campaign Group duly endorsed Livingstone's aim of ousting Tam Dalyell.

In the course of his *Tribune* self-advertisement, Livingstone chastised Lesley Smith of the Labour Co-ordinating Committee for having (in criticising his decision to stand) 'largely concentrated on personalities and ambitions in relation to the left slate for the Labour NEC'. He found this concentration on personality and ambition 'sad' which, curiously enough and for much the same reasons, is a fair description of how most of his new colleagues regard Ken Livingstone's own performance of recent months. Sad, and just a little bit bad.

Last week, in common with other MPs, I received a plaintive and thought-provoking letter from the Midhurst branch of Chichester CLP. 'In our area we have no prospect of our socialist beliefs being represented by anybody in Parliament . . . No more than a dozen strong, we need your help and your support.' I have little doubt that Tam Dalyell will have been among the first to respond to the accompanying plea to MPs to 'come and talk directly with us'. But the important point of which to remind Chichester and all the other constituency Labour parties in a similar position is that they are a lot more relevant than they might, in their lower moments, think. The party also needs their help and support, in the form of rational decision-making.

For, when it comes to casting a vote in elections for the NEC, Chichester with its 20,177 Tory majority over the Alliance has exactly the same status as the safest Labour bastion in the land. That is how it should be. But there is an accompanying responsibility to treat that vote very seriously, and not as an abstract exercise in political purity. Working for Labour in Chichester may be a lonely cause, but the votes of all the Chichesters within the Labour Party are of crucial importance. It is no exaggeration to say that the collective wisdom of delegates from constituencies in which we achieved poor third places, will, through these NEC elections, determine the post-1987 face of the Labour Party.

SO IS IT in the interests of the Labour Party, as perceived by activists in these huge areas of the country devoid of Labour MPs, to evict Tam Dalyell in order to elevate Ken Livingstone? I hope not, and I doubt if there is much rational evidence in support of such a conclusion. Is the London Labour Party, where the anti-Labour swing was higher than anywhere else in the UK, a model for the rest of the country? And if not, why reward the architect? I understand that even the Brent East CLP has recognised that the local campaign which gave such an appalling result was a complacent fiasco. Do we really want the same kind of leadership applied to the movement in the country?

> ***'Is the London Labour Party, where the anti-Labour swing was higher than anywhere else in the UK, a model for the rest of the country?'***

Writing in the *London Daily News*, Ken Livingstone has airily dismissed the notion that 'the London factor' made any distinctive contribution to the result in the city, far less in the country as a whole. Labour, he argues, lost the general election because 2½ per cent of skilled manual workers swung to Mrs Thatcher. There are fewer skilled workers in the 'ghettoes' — an interesting choice of word — of Scotland, Wales and the North of England, so Labour did better there. I believe that to be a facile, self-serving interpretation of events, which fails to address the question of why we lost that crucial middle-ground support. Do we really want to endorse such an analysis via the NEC elections?

Livingstone tells us that Labour's electoral defeat had nothing to do with London yet candidates tens and hundreds of miles from London complain bitterly that the 'London factor' was a problem for them! It's a curious contradiction. I do not overestimate London's role in the national perception of Labour's credibility gap, any more than I underestimate it. But to deny that it exists is the bolt-hole of a politician who is unprepared to contemplate the consequences of his own actions. Will the NEC elections serve to exonerate self-exoneration? If they do, then we are in even deeper trouble than previously suspected.

The NEC needs, I believe, to be less tied up with London, rather than more. It is an astonishing truth that Tam Dalyell is the first Scot ever to be elected to the NEC through the constituency section. That is largely because the numerically overwhelming southern constituencies have tended to identify with more familiar figures, who use London as their stage. In the wake of the election outcome, and all the talk of a divided Britain, is that a form of parochialism that can be persisted in?

It is very much a minority position within the Labour Party, but I dislike slates. They magnify political dwarfs and reward those who devote their lives to intrigue. Tam Dalyell, it is true, was the beneficiary of a slate last year, when the Campaign Group volunteered its support. But the main reason why Tam received such a handsome vote was that he had given extraordinarily good political service to the party — on the Falklands issue and, most significantly, during the Westland affair when he revealed the name of Colette Bowe and thus came desperately close, as we now know, to dislodging Margaret Thatcher.

The main attack on him now is that he vocally and effectively argued for the imposition of a candidate by the NEC for the by-election at Knowsley North, where Mr Leslie Huckfield would have been preferred by the local party. Each individual member of the Labour Party is obliged to ponder the validity of that criticism. A glance at by-election results, where local decision-making has remained gloriously paramount, and some consideration of the implications which flowed from resultant disasters, would be instructive.

I DO NOT know Ken Livingstone, and may thus have missed out on the famous charm. I do not mind being characterised by him, along with other Scottish and Northern MPs, as a habitué of London bars and brothels to the exclusion of any serious political contribution. I am tolerant enough to ridicule rather than revile a man who sends out press releases about his virtuous vote against the MPs' pay rise, while zealously maximising his own media earnings. (Incidentally, his abstention on the amendment in favour of setting outside earnings against parliamentary salary was much more revealing.)

But when he sets out, with so much calculation and so little justification, to trample on Tam Dalyell, then he touches a raw nerve. The Labour Party needs a lot more Tam Dalyells to work, probe, campaign in every corner of the land, and then *increase* his constituency majority. Does it need a lot more of the Brent East formula? That's the litmus test that should be applied, in good conscience, by every constituency from the Rhondda to Chichester. □

Ben Pimlott takes over from Peter Kellner as political columnist in mid-autumn.

Brian Wilson is MP for Cunninghame North.

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Middle ground laid to waste

As South Africa's black miners prepare to strike on Sunday, **PHILLIP VAN NIEKERK** *reports on the receding of revolutionary hopes and the threat of desolation*

Johannesburg

TOM BOYA, the Mayor of Daveyton, a large black ghetto east of Johannesburg, was expounding to reporters over lunch on the need to talk to all parties involved in the conflict in South Africa. 'Does this mean,' one of the reporters asked, 'that you will visit the African National Congress in Lusaka?' A sly smile creased his face: 'Off the record . . .' the mayor began as the reporters reached for the pause buttons on their tape recorders expecting an important announcement. 'Off the record, do you guys have their phone number?'

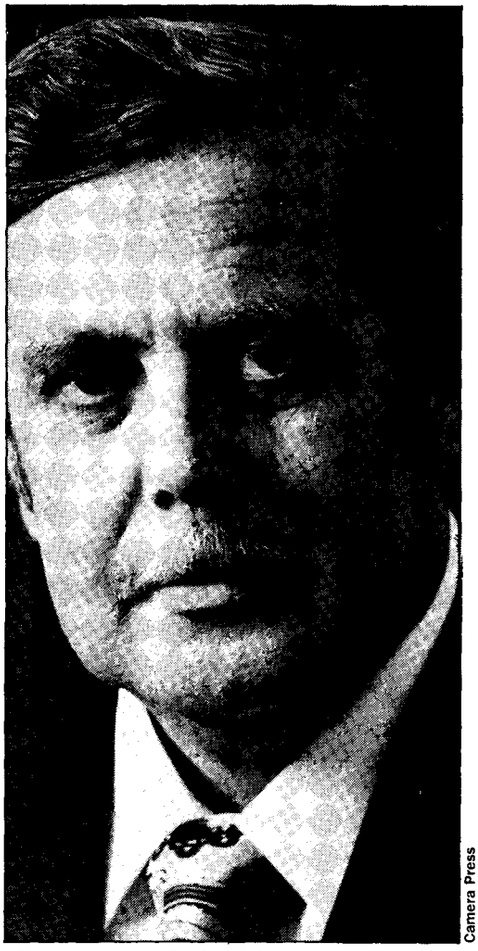
Boya, who heads a coalition of black town councillors under the umbrella of the United Municipalities of South Africa (UMSA), is part of the contested middle ground in South Africa.

He is being assiduously wooed by the government to participate in a proposed National Statutory Council which would give blacks advisory powers in central government. Yet to overcome his credibility problem in his own community he has enunciated a set of preconditions for participation, including the release of political prisoners, the unbanning of the ANC and the Pan-Africanist Congress and the lifting of the State of Emergency. As the conversation with the reporters reveals, the struggle for the middle ground can be exceedingly banal, yet it is important to remember that it is just about the only show in town. At the very least, it diverts us from the stalemate between white power and the struggle for a non-racial democracy, and the subcontinent's consequent descent into war.

The fight for the middle ground is certainly producing good theatre. We have seen, for instance, the incongruous scenes when a group of about 60 liberal whites, most of them Afrikaners, were fêted in West Africa after holding talks with the ANC.

Then there was the sight of 'constitutional development and planning minister' Chris Heunis, bloated and sweating on state-controlled black television, being questioned by an aggressive black interviewer. 'Why won't you release political prisoners such as Nelson Mandela and unban the African National Congress?' And Heunis, a handkerchief at his brow, replying: 'These demands are not insurmountable.'

As the theatre grows increasingly bizarre, the war itself progressively moves into the shadows. There is tight censorship, a new generation of activists has been driven underground or into the arms of their exiled comrades, Pretoria has deployed hit squads, surrogate guerrilla armies and vigilantes, the townships are being ruled by a network of joint management committees, under the control of the military and police, which are neither elected nor even known by the general public.



Camera Press

Minister for 'constitutional development and planning', Chris Heunis: 'bloated and sweating'

Revolution off the air

The South African state is looking stronger than it has for some time. Far from being the last kick of a dying horse, as Winnie Mandela described it, the State of Emergency has worked in key areas. The violence has subsided and most townships are 'governable' again. The alternative structures which were being built up have been smashed in most areas with the exception of Soweto. The mood among activists that revolution was in the air has been dispelled. And censorship has taken South Africa off the front pages and TV screens of the world.

Having shrugged off the most dire sanctions threats, Pretoria is virtually unrestrained by the international community. It crosses the borders of neighbouring states at will. If anything, the pressure is coming from the extreme right wing.

The Conservative Party is now the official opposition in parliament, having captured a quarter of the votes in the 6 May whites-only election — even though a large number of right-wing whites remained loyal to the ruling National Party. Where the Americans could try to coax Pretoria with carrots or sticks, the white electorate can realistically vote them out of power in the next general election due in 1989.

Nor should Pretoria's ruthlessness ever be underestimated. It has destabilised, divided and terrorised black communities by feeding vigilantes into political spaces created by the detention of activists.

In recent months a campaign has been launched to eliminate ANC operatives throughout the world, with one of Umkhonto We Sizwe's top commanders, Cassius Make, being gunned down in Swaziland. Though the ANC responded with a powerful car bomb in central Johannesburg, it has yet to mount a truly effective guerrilla war.

> ***'Whites lack the means to make rational judgments — race separateness coupled with censorship magnifies the gulf with reality'***

Pretoria is on the offensive, isolating and eliminating activists. On the other side, it is bidding to win over the bulk of people in target communities such as Alexandra through material improvements to the ghettoes. These improvements are overseen by sophisticated joint management committees whose role is to subvert the exceptionally slow apartheid bureaucracy and prevent points of conflict developing.

On the national level, President P. W. Botha and his advisers are aware that force alone will not ensure the survival of white rule forever, and thus are in search of an internal settlement with black leaders.

They often refer to the fact that only 20 per cent of the struggle is military and 80 per cent political. Yet despite everything the government is certainly not winning in its attempts to co-opt black leadership.

Inventing middle ground

In the ghettoes the ANC and its allies, including the United Democratic Front, retain mass support. The country's largest union federation — the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) — has recently endorsed the Freedom Charter, effectively allying itself with the Congress movement. The South African Council of Churches has elected as general secretary a prominent UDF activist, the Reverend Frank Chikane.

The calibre of activist leaders — many of whom were schooled during the uprising of 1976 — is also extremely high. Most have spent long periods in detention. They are politically developed, tough and principled, particularly when compared to the

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often corrupt opportunists which the government has to deal with. The most telling mark of the government's political failure is that even those black leaders normally regarded by activists as 'sell-outs' have spurned Botha's invitation to join the National Statutory Council. These include the above-mentioned Tom Boya and Chief Mangosuthu Gatsha Buthelezi, the head of the Zulu-based Inkatha movement.

Only two black groups have indicated they will join the council. They are the Federal Independent Democratic Alliance which is believed to be purely an invention of the government, and the Urban Councils Association of South Africa from which UMSA broke away. Both support the state of emergency and have extremely doubtful support.

The failure to get black leaders to talk cannot be blamed on the marketing technique of the smooth-talking deputy minister of constitutional development and planning, Dr Stoffel van der Merwe, a relative liberal compared to the National Party ideologues who handled black affairs in the past.

Entrusted with the mission to draw in credible black leaders, van der Merwe has declared a willingness to talk to a broad spectrum of black opinion, including political prisoners and the UDF. 'A whole new South Africa needs to be set up,' says van der Merwe. 'The sooner black leaders become involved, the better the chances that the South Africa of the future will be to their liking.' These words have created inflated expectations. Van der Merwe has been dubbed 'Dr Yes' by the liberal English-language press and hailed as a conciliator for his willingness to talk to black political organisations. 'Talks about talks are within range,' editorialised Johannesburg's *Sunday Star*. 'Encouraging signs are building up of a genuine government determination to seek negotiation with genuine black leaders on real issues.'

Yet the substance of the package on offer is, as ever, inadequate. Where virtually all black groups want to talk about transition to a non-racial democracy, Botha absolutely refuses to budge from 'power sharing' based on strongly entrenched group rights with protections for minorities. Some analysts believe that despite the clear message from the white electorate on 6 May, there is confusion within the government. There are people who genuinely want an accommodation, but they will have to wait until Botha leaves office because there is no chance of movement on his terms. The gap is so great that the sort of accommodation he is interested in even excludes Buthelezi.

The most important cause of the stalemate is the total unwillingness of the government to contemplate talking to the ANC. Even if it had once wanted to leave its options open (such as during the initiatives of the Commonwealth Eminent Person's Group last year), Pretoria has unleashed such a white backlash through the constant anti-ANC propaganda in the Afrikaans press and on state-controlled television that it probably could not publicly talk to the organisation if it wanted to.

Some political scientists have attempted to explain white intransigence in terms of an ethnic rather than class model in which Afrikaner nationalists struggle with African nationalists for control of the same homeland. This was the point of view argued by Professor Herman Gilliomee, of the University of Cape Town, at the recent Dakar conference — and which was strongly refuted by the ANC.

While correctly warning of the almost irrational determination of whites to hold onto power, this argument ignores the fact that more than half the country's English-speaking population voted for the National Party on 6 May. Analysing the consciousness of South African whites is neither a simple matter of rational economic self-interest nor of Afrikaner nationalists mobilised around their ethnic identity.

With the usual disclaimer that there is still a substantial number of whites outside the *laager*, including a growing number of middle-class Afrikaners, the whites are, in essence, scared. They are increasingly isolated in their suburbs, ringed by a hostile world in the townships, in the rest of Africa, and in Washington, Moscow and the United Nations. They lack the means to make rational judgments because they are totally misinformed. Race separateness means most whites have never been inside a black township or had a close black friend. The soporific and comfortable life in the suburbs coupled with censorship magnifies the gulf with reality.

The mass media, television in particular, enhances this ignorance and manipulates the emotions, creating a fear psychosis. Most whites have been brainwashed, literally from birth, into seeing the ANC merely as communist-controlled terrorists. Any hope that the 60 or so white liberals — dubbed the 'Dakarites' — would be able to pose a challenge to that view on their return has been dashed by the skilful manner in which the government has isolated and used them as political capital, particularly in the wake of last week's bomb.

Sanctions haven't worked

Much of the strategy from outside to break the deadlock is aimed at getting the government to negotiate. Even the ANC's armed struggle, which could never succeed on its own against the South African military, has to be premised on the belief that it is one of a number of pressures forcing Pretoria one day to the negotiating table.

Yet the armed struggle and sanctions up to now have been singularly ineffective in doing just that. Short of state-of-war sanctions there is nothing on the horizon which could even tempt the government to consider talks with the ANC.

The one area of resistance which has survived the emergency intact, due to strong organisation at the grassroots, are the trade unions which have been pushed increasingly into a high-profile political role. Yet the possibilities of a general political strike as an effective strategy remain extremely limited.

The most strategic section of the black working class are the more than half a million mineworkers. Mostly migrants from the rural areas and other southern African states. While their leadership in the National Union of Mineworkers is probably the most political within COSATU and they have been mobilised around economic and safety issues, these workers have shown a marked reluctance to embark on strictly political action. Even the May Day and 16 June stoppages — which now routinely command the support of organised workers — receive little support from the miners.

This is partly due to the isolated nature of the

Mark of a death-squad

ERIC MNTONGA, a 35-year-old co-director of Dr Frederick van Zyl Slabbert's Institute for a Democratic Alternative in South Africa (IDASA), was found brutally murdered last week — the latest in a series of deaths or disappearances of prominent activists.

Mntonga disappered on his way to a meeting on 24 July. He was later found next to his car on a remote stretch of road with his hands and feet tied and with a stab wound in the heart. A private pathologist reported that the cause of death was a blow to the head with a blunt instrument.

A large, powerfully-built man, Mntonga was a top rugby player in the border region a decade ago. He rose to prominence in 1981 as the leader of several hundred workers, sacked by the British-owned Wilson-Rowntree plant in East London for striking over union recognition. A nationwide consumer boycott was launched against the company. His union — the South Africa Allied Workers Union (SAAWU) — came under a sustained assault from three sides: employers, the Ciskei and the South African security police. In December 1981 he was arrested at the union's offices in East London and held in solitary confinement for nine months.

It has been widely speculated that Mntonga's death was related to the visit to Dakar organised by Slabbert and IDASA (which he did not attend). If that is indeed the case, it is a cruel irony that he should be the victim of white anger at whites talking to the African National Congress (ANC).

Whatever the cause, his death has increased anxiety over death squads roaming the country, particularly the Eastern Cape where Mntonga was murdered. On the same day, Zola Nozewu, leader of a squatter community near East London, was stabbed to death by vigilantes. Whether the assassins are right-wing free agents acting on their own initiative or linked to state-created hit squads, they are seldom tracked down by police.

Hundreds of activists have disappeared or been found murdered in the past few years. None of the cases has been 'solved'. In a similar death to Mntonga's, four activists from the Eastern Cape town of Cradock — Matthew Goniwe, Fort Calata, Thomas Mkhonto and Sicelo Mhlawvu — were abducted and brutally murdered in July 1985. Earlier the same year, in May, three members of the executive of the Port Elizabeth Black People's Organisation (PEBCO) — Sipho Hashe, Qaqawuli Godolozi and Champion Galela — vanished and have not been seen since. In December last year activist Dr Fabian Ribiero and his wife, Florence, were gunned down by masked raiders at their Mamelodi home. Trade unionists on strike have been hacked to death; activists have had their homes bombed; parcel bombs have killed activists in exile; and death squads have abducted and killed exiles in the neighbouring states.

Mntonga will be buried near civil rights lawyer Griffiths Mxenge, SAAWU's lawyer, who was brutally hacked to death in Natal in 1981. Mxenge's wife, Victoria, also a civil rights lawyer, was gunned down in 1985. ●

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mining compounds. In South Africa township stayaways are a traditional and popular form of protest. They are most successful when township-based organisations and unions combine for joint action. The political resolution at COSATU's congress last month addressed itself to alliances with other 'democratic and progressive' organisations — the very structures which have borne the full weight of the State of Emergency. Thus political action is based on an alliance with allies which have been wiped out or driven underground.

A general strike was attempted — on 14 July last year — but flopped completely because the township groups were not involved and there had been little consultation with the rank and file.

Finally, the politicisation of COSATU's leadership leaves them vulnerable to attack by a state which has veered close to outright confrontation with the unions this year. Unionists already fear that the state is planning a treason trial involving COSATU's top leadership, which would remove them from the field in much the same way as the UDF's leadership has been sidelined.

The only other signs of movement on the ground come from a completely different area. Despite the large-scale detentions, researchers have found a surprising willingness among localised black leaders to talk to local authorities. One example was the recent three-hour meeting between representatives of the street committees in Soweto and Nico Malan, the town clerk and Pretoria's most senior official in the township, which was called to discuss a year-long rent boycott. The street committees — which are local structures of resistance — fall under the umbrella of the Soweto Civic Association, an affiliate of the UDF.

If the stalemate continues for much longer, the alternative is an escalation of what is happening already: the slide of southern Africa into war, accompanied by the decay of the South African economy — the strongest on the continent — leaving a wasteland filled with refugees and corpses to be inherited by whoever is still around to take over.

There will be no solution to the wars in Angola and Mozambique, to the colonisation of Namibia and to destabilisation of the entire region until some kind of solution is reached in South Africa. No start will be made to the economic problems of South Africa's 'outsiders' — the growing millions of unemployed in resettlement camps in the bantustans or in squatter camps on the periphery of the metropolitan areas.

Finally, there will be no start to repairing the hatred and anger which grows with each generation.

The other day an activist who was detained for five months under the State of Emergency pointed at his three-and-a-half year-old child sleeping on a couch.

> I can't leave him alone for five minutes. I've got to take him with me everywhere. He thinks meetings are places where they pick me up. He asks me about prison . When I was in detention he asked my wife if there was such a person as me or if he had only ever dreamt about me. He hates police, he hates whites. The other day my boss tried to touch him and he kicked him. I don't think he sees whites as human beings. □

Ballad of a Spycatcher

Sung to the tune of 'Down In A Coal Mine' (or any tune that fits)

Leon Rosselson

Now listen, children, while I sing this ballad I've just made
About a Peter (Wright not Rabbit) — a spycatcher by trade,
I'll sing of how he joined a special gang called MI5
— Who guard our sacred secrets so that Liberty may thrive —
And of how young Peter, quick to learn, soon got to know the ropes,
The trick of picking locks, the art of opening envelopes,
And of how the Senior Officers began their working day
By trying to solve the crossword (in 'The Times' needless to say) —

Chorus: But of all the strange things I relate, the strangest is to me
That this doggerel I'm singing contravenes the Rule of Three,
For Nanny (God bless Nanny!) thinks it wouldn't do for you
To know about the naughty things that grown-up people do.

SF — Special Facility — was Peter's favourite toy
And night and day he played with it like any little boy
For tapping phones and bugging rooms were what he loved the best,
'Five years' (says Wright) 'we bugged and burgled at the State's behest.'
They bugged the Russian Embassy which wasn't very chic
So they bugged the French, the Chinese, the Egyptian and the Greek.
They bugged Khrushchev's room in Claridges and listened in with care
While K. decided on his tie and how he'd part his hair.

Chorus: But of all the strange things I'll relate . . .

They bugged colonial conferences, then they turned their minds
To keeping tabs on militants and lefties of all kinds,
Trade Unionists and students were the targets of their wiles,
And they burgled CP members' homes and stole the Party's files.
And what did it add up to? And what did it avail,
All this burgling and bugging and intercepting mail?
Did it save us from the Russians? Did it help to keep us free?
Did it keep this country green and pleasant? Did it buggery!

Chorus: But of all the strange things I'll relate . . .

The trouble was (says Peter) that we often were misled
And the Russians always seemed to be a step or two ahead,
For whatever MI5 knew, the Russians knew it, too,
And when we knew they knew, they knew we knew they knew we knew.
Petrovsky? Was he theirs or ours? A triumph or a con?
So back and forth and round and round, the mazy dance went on,
While Peter set up Operations Sunshine, Pigroot, Choir,
Dewworm, Mole (what lovely names!) — and saw them all misfire.

Chorus: But of all the strange things I'll relate . . .

I fear the worst, says Peter, and this I can't forgive,
For years this Secret Service has been leaking like a sieve.
The evidence is growing, there is someone placed on high
Who is tipping off the Russians — a traitor and a spy.
Is it Mitchell? Is it Hollis? The outfit's own D'G?
Incredible! I hear you say, but Wright would not agree.
His finger points to Hollis — I'll unmask him if I can.
He's ex-public school and Oxford and I never liked the man.

Chorus: But of all the strange things I'll relate . . .

And now the tale grows farcical — but should we laugh or cry? —
For the CIA man, Angleton, names Wilson as a spy.
And Cecil King, in '68, decides to lead a coup
Against the Wilson government — so strange it must be true.
And certain shady businessmen ask Peter for some gen
To discredit Harold Wilson and keep him out of Number Ten.
And a group of Senior Officers tell Wright of their intent
To save us from the menace of a Labour Government.

Chorus: But of all the strange things I'll relate . . .

Now I haven't time to tell you of those other dirty tricks
Like the plot to murder Nasser (but that was MI6).
And I haven't told of how the CIA in '65
Planned to open up its sharky mouth and swallow MI5.
But one more thing I feel that I should bring to your attention,
For all his pains, poor Peter never got his proper pension.
So why not buy his book yourself and do the man some good,
So that he can die in comfort, as an ex-spycatcher should.

Final Chorus: And of all the things I've told you, the strangest is to me
That this doggerel I've been singing contravenes the Rule of Three,
For Nanny (God bless Nanny!) thinks it wouldn't do for you
To know about the naughty things that grown-up people do.

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RETHINK

Out of Euro-sulk

HUGH O'SHAUGHNESSY *castigates the Labour Party's hostility to the European Community as a self-indulgence*

WHETHER the mildly xenophobic wing of the Labour Party likes it or not, there have been a stream of happenings in Europe in the past month which have, or promise to have, profound effects on life in this country. Last week a Socialist president of France signed a treaty with a British Conservative prime minister on the construction of a Channel tunnel. The event was not greeted in Britain with any outbreak of popular hostility or dismay that I noticed.

In Strasbourg Lord Cockfield, the Conservative appointee to the European Commission, announced his plans to standardise VAT throughout the Community as part of his relentless efforts to put the interests of business above the wider interests of European society as a whole. That decision in itself was a very important one for Britain, decreeing as it did a rise in the cost of food, children's clothes, funerals and many other items and a reduction in the price of port and cigars. In some brilliant initiatives on VAT, badly reported in Britain, Labour tacticians in Brussels and Strasbourg succeeded in gravely embarrassing Margaret Thatcher, who has sworn to oppose the introduction of the tax on essentials, and routed the Conservative MEPs in the European Parliament. (David Martin, the new centrist leader of the British Labour Group in Strasbourg, seems to have brought some unaccustomed discipline and effectiveness to that hitherto unhappy body.)

And, as the Thatcher government gets deeper in the mire of censorship over the Wright affair, the European Court of Human Rights is emerging as the tribunal which is likely sooner or later to reverse the Prime Minister's dangerously authoritarian leanings.

No longer can the politically literate British voter pretend that he or she need not take into account anything that happens on the other side of the Channel. What happens there is of day-to-day importance in almost every sphere of British society and the stream of happenings will soon become a flood.

Nor can the Labour Party, engaged as it is in a radical re-examination of its policies, afford the luxury of ignoring the political experiences of Western European democratic socialist parties, inside and outside the Community. What thinking Labour supporter could claim that the victories and defeats experienced by our sister parties in Europe, from the French and Spanish socialists to the West German and Swedish social democrats, are of no interest or relevance in Britain? To study European socialist experience is not to follow any foreign path in a slavish fashion but, at the very least, to have the chance of avoiding the mistakes committed and acknowledged by men and women in fraternal parties which operate in societies more or less similar to our own.

The mistrusting nucleus

To all but a nucleus of members of the Labour Party — a small nucleus and an important one but one which is in decline — events of the past few weeks will have pushed home one inescapable truth about the party's attitude towards our neighbours in Europe. The truth is that this attitude, a bewildered sort of sulking and an unwillingness to accept that a valid democratic socialism can exist outside these shores, is a luxury of self-indulgence Labour can no longer afford.

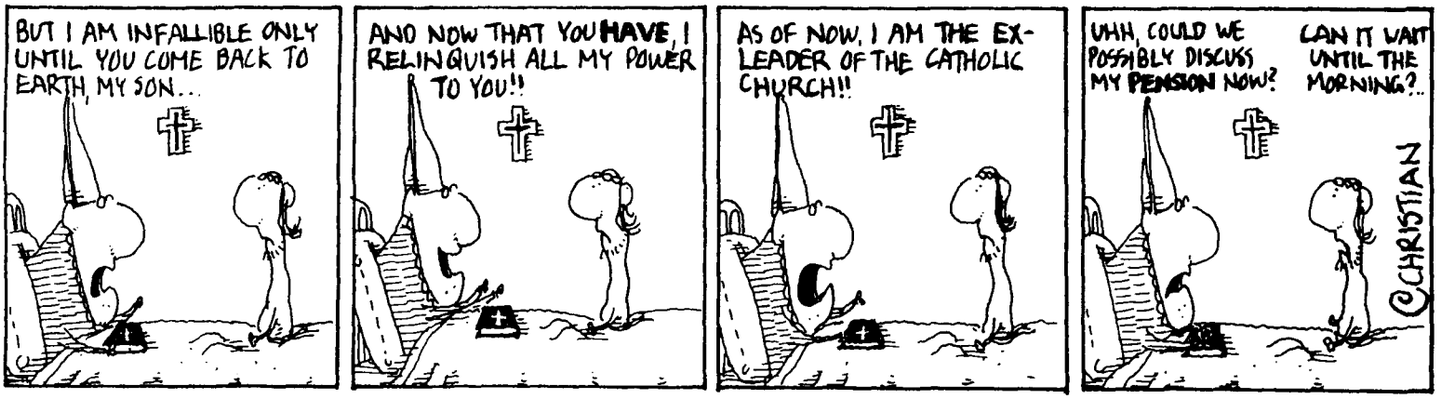
The planning of this country's relations with the rest of Europe under the next Labour government cannot effectively be carried on with such a degree of mistrust and incipient xenophobia. It also passes up the opportunity for working people in Britain to reshape the European Community on more democratic, indeed socialist, lines. And British people are beginning to realise that opportunities are being lost in Europe: that an attitude of at best grudging acceptance of Community membership is hardly one to guarantee success in our relations with our 11 partners. Labour's attitude is as a consequence not electorally popular.

To assert this is not to accept the sort of generally uncritical attitude towards Europe that has been a hallmark of the Liberal/SDP Alliance. Nor does it mean accepting a Western Europe fashioned for the convenience of the multinationals. To call for a more positive Labour attitude to Community membership and towards Europe generally is to try to enlarge the scope for democratic socialism, not narrow it.

Nor, specifically, need our membership of the Community be the political and strategic straitjacket that the Eurosulkers fear it will become. The British Labour Party is not, for example, the only grouping in Europe which wants to cut the Common Agricultural Policy of the Community down to size. And there is no way Labour can achieve that worthy objective without close and detailed co-operation with similar-minded people in other states. Those who say they fear that membership of the Community obliges this country to continued and immutable militancy on the side of one of the world's superpowers and to membership of the NATO alliance as it stands forget three things. They forget that the original aim of the Community was the eminently peaceful one of unification of the French and German economies in such a way that war between those two could never break out again, that both Spain and France have much weaker operational links with the Organisation than Britain has and that Ireland has no formal NATO links of any sort.

My personal belief is that there can be no alternative for the Labour Party than to try with other European socialists to construct a strong and socially responsible European Community was strongly reinforced a few weeks back when I attended a conference at the Woodrow Wilson Centre in Washington on the state of US influence in Latin America which was addressed by, among others, Sergo Mikoyan, son of the late president of the Soviet Union. He laid particular emphasis on the fact that the new Soviet leadership had replaced the class struggle with the maintenance of world peace as the principal goal of foreign policy. When various of us suggested that the concept might be expressed more crudely as making every Soviet strategy subordinate to that of getting on with the US government, Mikoyan, an articulate and subtle thinker, did not demur.

No British socialist will criticise the thrust of Mikhail Gorbachev's initiatives with Washington on disarmament. At the same time it should come as no surprise, for instance, that the Soviets, in deference to Washington's spoken or tacit appeal, have drastically reduced the supply of oil to the government of Nicaragua at a moment when the Sandinistas are facing a big new onslaught from the US-backed *contra* terrorists. Superpower co-operation is clearly not an unmixed blessing. It is important that the British Labour Party should play its part, with its fraternal parties in the rest of Europe, in constructing an alternative to the Soviet Union's and the United States' set of common interests and common visions of society. □


BUT I AM INFALLIBLE ONLY UNTIL YOU COME BACK TO EARTH, MY SON...
AND NOW THAT YOU HAVE, I RELINQUISH ALL MY POWER TO YOU!!
AS OF NOW, I AM THE EX-LEADER OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH!!
UHH, COULD WE POSSIBLY DISCUSS MY PENSION NOW?
CAN IT WAIT UNTIL THE MORNING?..
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MEDIA

BBC cooks the books

John Ellis

LAST WEEK, in a considerable public relations coup, the BBC announced its first-ever list of programmes commissioned from independent production companies. This fundamentally alters the BBC's traditional way of operating, whereby it made its programmes itself, or bought them once finished from other sources, usually abroad. On Wednesday, Michael Grade unveiled a list of productions to be commissioned (not bought) from British-based independents.

This will strengthen the necessary 'third force' in British broadcasting demanded by government and others as a condition of survival in the more open and competitive broadcasting market which is now developing. It will also, in Michael Grade's words, 'widen viewers' choice', since independent companies, through Channel 4, have pioneered new types of programmes and new ways of making them.

> ***Most so-called independent productions are closely associated with BBC staff. Transworld International, for instance, is the independent company formed by David Coleman. At least he is offering a vaguely innovative sports programme: the Ladies British Open Golf tournament — an event that has previously passed golf-hungry television by***

That, at least, is the theory. A close examination of the BBC's list shows otherwise. Although this is always a subjective judgement, it seems that innovative programmes are thin on the ground. Innovative production relationships are just as hard to find, as many of the deals involved have been announced prematurely. Not a few producers are angry that their productions have been included at all, since they have signed no contracts, and many major matters (like rights over foreign distribution and even the basic budget) still have to be resolved. One producer, anonymously of course, protests that the programme listed from them is not an independent production at all.

All this is not surprising, since the basic contract terms have not yet been negotiated by the Independent Access Steering Committee (IASC), though agreement is getting closer. Perhaps it should be taken as an earnest of the BBC's good intent that they want to hurry the process on, and integrate independent output into their schedules. Some of the listed programmes have indeed been transmitted already, but I doubt whether the viewers noticed, since they were indistinguishable from the normal run of BBC programmes with their formidable 'house style'.

Combing through the list, the reason becomes immediately clear. Most of the productions are closely associated with the BBC staff: Transworld International, for instance, is the independent company formed by David Coleman. (At least Coleman is offering a vaguely innovatory sports programme: the Ladies British Open Golf tournament, an event that has previously passed golf-hungry TV by.) Coleman's is an extreme case of 'independent' production by BBC insiders, but much of the documentary output in particular is from groups of producers who in the past were responsible for some of the BBC's most prestigious series. In fact, I was able to identify only one producer who was totally new to the BBC among the 44 listed commissions.

The whole list has a threadbare quality to it. And since one series proposes to bring two cooks over from New Zealand (and is listed *twice* for its pains), and another proposes to export a British cook back to New Zealand, the more Freudian inclined amongst us are tempted to think that the BBC is guilty of cooking the books in its announcement.

This does need to be put into context. The BBC has at least announced some genuine independent production, some wholly financed by it. Over at ITV, the allegedly commercial end of broadcasting, no such progress has been made. Where the BBC seems quite close to agreement of basic contract terms with the IASC, negotiations with the ITCA companies (the ones who run ITV) have been broken off. Successive meetings were left unresolved, since the ITCA team were never really empowered to negotiate on behalf of their 16 members. It seems that the IBA, the regulatory body which allocates ITV franchises, will have to intervene and impose basic terms. Meanwhile, independent companies approaching ITV companies are being offered worse terms than the BBC's. In particular the ITCA companies insist that independent producers use the commissioning company's studios and crews; and what is an independent producer if not one who can choose which facilities to use?

It seems, in short, that old Auntie BBC has been able to respond to the demand for change far faster than the supposedly dynamic market-oriented ITV sector. This, given the BBC's attitude under Alastair Milne's management only a year ago, is a considerable achievement. For Milne's management team's attitude was, like some current ITCA company executives, 'independent production? over my dead body'. Quite.

Independent production does solve a structural problem for the BBC, as I have explained (*NS* 10 April 1987). The BBC is relieved of the need to provide all its own facilities, and therefore of the escalating capital expenditure implied, since video technology is changing fast and the licence fee income is index linked. In the long run, independent production, hiring facilities as and when needed, is a convenient way out. But in the short run, the BBC does not seem to be able to come up with enough cash to fund independent work. While it spends an average £60,000 an hour on its own network programmes, the independent package works out at £40,000 an hour at most. So half the programmes at least are co-productions, where the independent comes with a substantial investment of their own, like the Rank Organisation for a new series of *The Best of British* (i.e. clips from old Rank films).

Independent production may provide a convenient solution to the BBC's cash problems, but it is not a solution of its own choosing. It is willed by government (the same government that index-linked the BBC's licence fee), and independent production was a Tory manifesto commitment (as a stocking-filler, I presume, since there are no votes in it). The government has imposed a timetable for the introduction of independent production onto the BBC and ITV channels: in four year's time, 25 per cent of new production should be by independents.

By a reasonable calculation, the BBC's announced 44 productions would comprise only a small fraction of this (about 7 per cent of new output), even if they were all genuinely independent works. The government intends to legislate on broadcasting during 1988, and may well impose a solution if the BBC and ITV have not shown that they are doing their best to facilitate a structural change in broadcasting.

> ***Independent production may provide a convenient solution to the BBC's cash problems. It doesn't need to provide all its own facilities, and is therefore relieved of the escalating capital costs of fast-changing video technology while its licence fee income is index linked. But it is not a solution of its own choosing — it was a stocking-filler in the Tory manifesto***

A government-imposed structural change is likely to be less constructive than that which independent producers are currently pressing for: 25 per cent of new programmes in four years' time being made by a wide range of companies not controlled by broadcasters and which have free choice of which facilities to use and how to use them to best advantage. A small structural change of this kind should yield a large change in the kinds of programmes made, and ways that they are made. □

John Ellis is a member of the Independent Access Steering Committee.

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A funeral in a meadow

NIKKI FOSTER *writes of an enclosed, crowded tragedy*

A FEW WEEKS AGO, Eddie Bennet was killed in a car crash. His brother Gary, the only passenger, was severely injured. Like so many daily tragedies, the local newspaper reported a few lines of known facts, leaving the living drama well alone.

Eddie and his brother were driving home in a second-hand car, bought that day from a scrap-metal dealer of their acquaintance. Eddie was demonstrating to Gary the power and speed of his new purchase, not only for his own pleasure but also to entertain the van load of relatives following a short way behind. Numerous pints had been drunk, they were half a mile from home, the winding road was traffic-free and moon-lit.

Eddie was the eldest of 14 brothers and sisters, the common-law husband of a handsome wife and father of seven children. He lived in a peaceful three-acre meadow furnished with 15 caravans, numerous lorries and cars and the ubiquitous fray of Alsatian dogs. The family made a living by seasonal work, a little wheeling and dealing, but essentially by their wits.

On picking up the pall of dust and steaming jungle of metal in its headlights, the van carrying Eddie's other brothers and two in-laws slowed up in shock, swerved on and raced back to the field for a pick-up truck. The idea foremost in their minds was to move the wreck onto their own land as fast as possible, away from the prying eyes of the local police.

It was 40 minutes after the accident when one member of the family pleaded to phone for an ambulance. Seventy-five minutes later, Eddie was still being cut free from the wreckage and Gary was racing to intensive care. In the wake of the flashing ambulance was a convoy of vehicles carrying 18 members of the family, including two children.

The edgy crush

At 1.20am, even as Gary was undergoing emergency surgery, the news that Eddie was dead filtered into the hospital corridor, where sisters, brothers, wives and both parents waited in an edgy crush.

There was an immediate wail of anguish which rose like the spring tide. Passing medical staff were accosted, dragged about and abused and only the sight of the despised constabulary caused the awesome keening and caterwauling to move to the street outside.

After prolonged pressure and threats, Eddie's parents were allowed to see his body; the woman promptly passed out, his father prostrating himself on the sheets, in tears. As dawn broke, the last car set off for home.

Six days later, Eddie was sufficiently rebuilt to be brought back to his caravan. The body lay on his bed, while the family took turns to sit beside it, talking and weeping through the night, assisting Eddie on his journey to the next world. The tree, bearing the scars of impact, shreds of metal still embedded in the bark, was carved with a cross. To release Eddie's spirit, otherwise trapped forever in the leafy hedgerow, a star of yellow and white carnations was placed against the trunk.

The funeral was attended by over a thousand people. An uneasy TV camera lurked on the fringes of the crowds as they massed among the caravans. The meadow turned to mud. Five flat-bed trucks carrying wreaths followed 12 hired limousines which tailed Eddie's coffin to its final resting place. The snake of vehicles carrying the grief-stricken relatives filled the country road to the churchyard. Lunchtime drinkers stood outside the local to watch the cavalcade inch past.

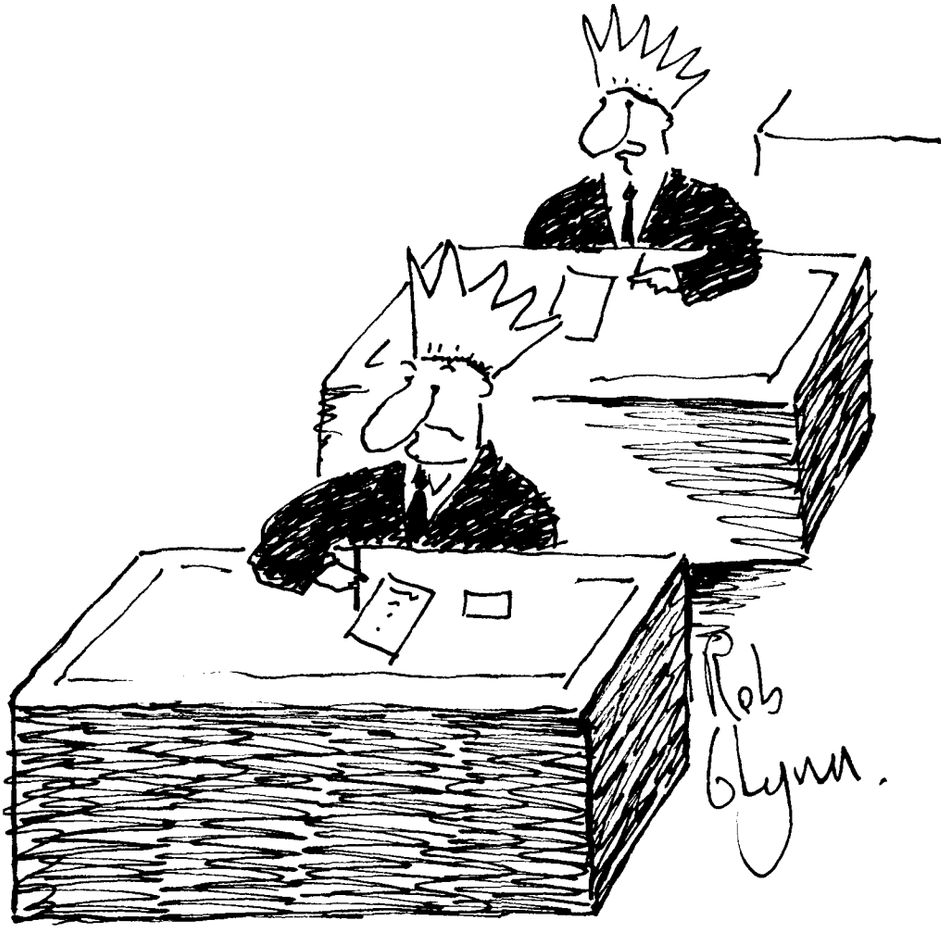
> *'There was fury that the television reporter referred to a gypsy funeral. Eddie was a business man: he did business with people. No one travelled any more'*

The service was relayed to the overspill outside. Five distraught women were prevented from falling onto the gleaming coffin as it was lowered into the ground. The wreaths, flowers magically shaped into Eddie's earthly possessions, his caravan, his lorry, his pint-pot, his gold buckle ring, spread far into the churchyard. A dozen flower pillows and plump hearts made of roses, even the doors of heaven with a swinging garlanded gate, were arranged on Eddie's grave. It was twilight before the last mourners could bring themselves to leave.

Flowers battered by rain

Back at the trailers, the TV news was watched with tea and tears. There was fury that the reporter referred to a 'gypsy funeral'. Eddie was a business man: he did business with people, no one travelled any more.

The desperation at Eddie's dying was slowly turning to anger, and the luckless reporter was just first on a growing list headed 'Get 'Em'. The shards and splinters that once was Eddie's car lie in a police garage. Gary languishes on traction, regaining his strength and his memory. The scrap-metal dealer has gone underground. He must have got wind of the 'Get 'Em' list upon which his name is writ large. The flowers on Eddie's grave are battered by the rain and losing their sculptured shapes. The enclosure of trailers, within exhaust-fume distance of a droning motorway, turns in on itself. A white and chromium fortress, it protects its residents and its rituals ferociously against the menace of the outside world. □



'I wish they'd stop setting up these working parties'

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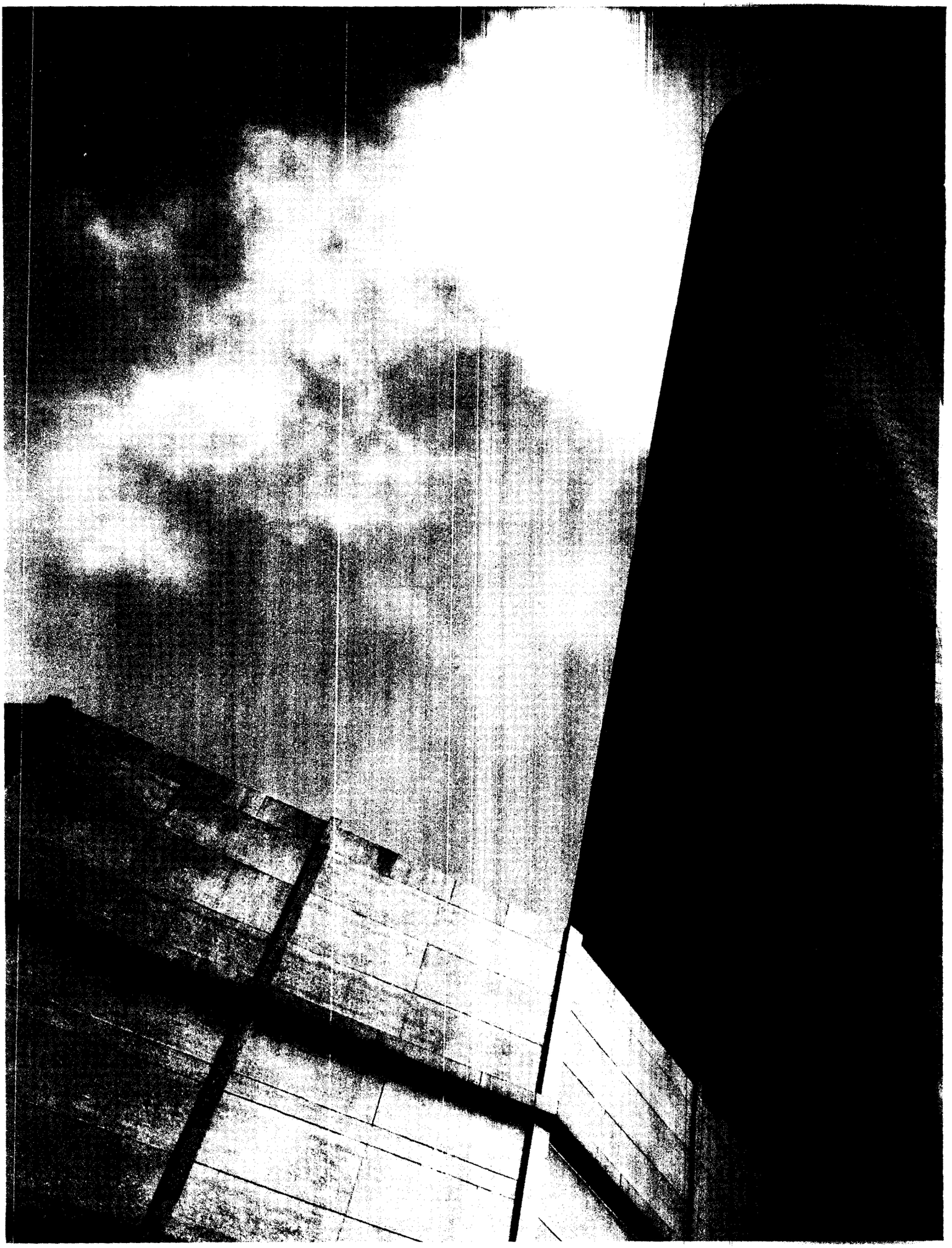

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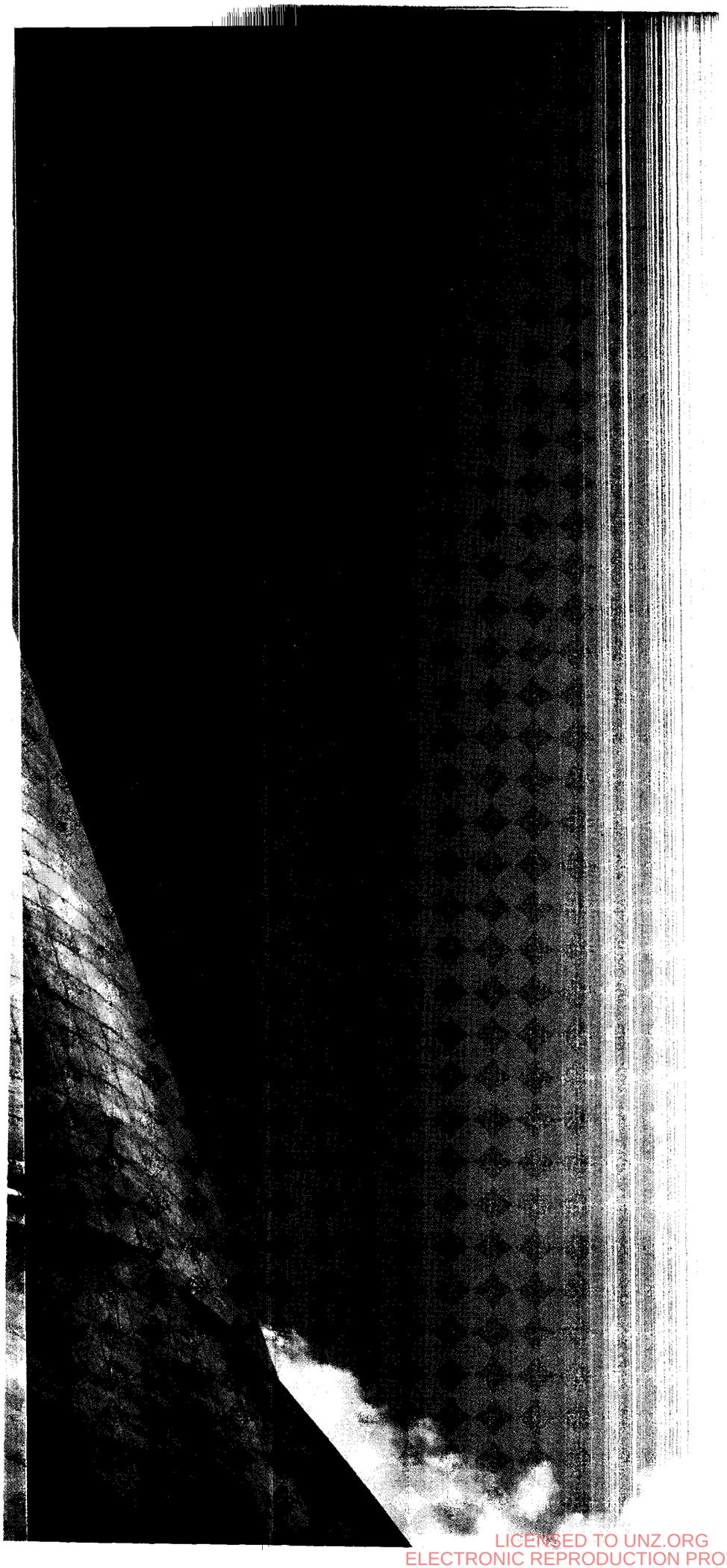

If you can't give up smoking, then cut down.

The Electricity Supply Industry has always regarded keeping the environment clean and healthy as one of its most important responsibilities.

In particular, the value of controlling harmful sulphur emissions has led the Central Electricity Generating Board to mount an extensive programme of counter measures costing £600 million.

Equipment has been developed that can cut sulphur emissions by 90 per cent. Over the next ten years this flue gas desulphurisation (FGD) equipment will start to be fitted in existing power stations.

Naturally, FGD equipment will be installed in all new coal-fired power stations as they are built.

Furthermore, the CEGB has recently announced a £170 million programme to substantially reduce emissions of nitrogen oxide from coal-fired power stations.

In an ideal world there would be no smoke at all. And to this end the CEGB is investigating alternative power sources and less pollutive fuels.

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ECONOMICS

Forecasters overheat — don't panic

Michael Hughes

'OVERHEATING' is now fashionable as an economic concern. Fears that the economy is too buoyant are expressed by some financial economists who argue that inflation is set to rise and a balance of payments crisis is inevitable. Hence they argue that interest rates now need to rise sharply. CBI economists, in contrast, play down this concern while independent forecasting bodies on average seem to be reserving judgment.

Since economists are sometimes in error but never in doubt, let me expresss my own bias right from the start. I do not believe that we are going to see *consumer* price inflation rise to 10 per cent next year. Neither do I expect a balance of payments crisis. I do not believe that interest rates need rise substantially. I am in danger of being an optimist. Let me explain why.

Overheating can occur either from demand being excessive or supply being inadequate. During the early 1970s, which has become a period for comparison with current events, demand was clearly excessive; skilled labour shortages were widespread; export orders were lost because of the inability to deliver on time; price increases were gathering momentum and the overall economic climate was unstable with wild interest-rate and exchange-rate gyrations.

The situation now is very different. Overall demand does not appear too excessive. Since the CBI survey as become the arbiter on this issue, let me use its evidence. The last quarter's figure for the proportion of respondents producing at full capacity is high, but showed a fall (Table 1). The balance of respondents who are raising prices is steadily falling and is below the results of the last six years. Additionally, skilled labour shortages, though still rising, are still below the levels in 1978/9 let alone the more excessive level attained in 1973. There are few signs of delivery problems and we are not experiencing wild gyrations in sterling and interest rates.

The balance of payments concern therefore is more likely to be a result of UK demand being more buoyant than that of its competitors. Having said this, the underlying trade picture is extremely difficult to assess. Never has the volatility of volume trade been so great as in the last nine months. An understanding of the underlying trends therefore has not been easy. But if this growth divergence is a relatively short-lived affair then no policy action is necessary.

There are signs that this could be the position. Demand growth in Europe, particularly Germany, seems to be accelerating as is that in the USA. It would therefore seem premature at least to use the trade figures as evidence that the UK is dangerously out of line.

THIS BRINGS us to the other side of the coin, namely domestic supply being inadequate. This picture is very interesting. Again using the CBI survey for evidence, it is quite clear that industry is now planning major increases in its investment programmes (Table 2). Investment is now being undertaken not to increase efficiency, which was the story in the 1980-85 period, but rather to expand capacity. There are few reasons to doubt that this capacity will not come on line. There is certainly no shortage of money to finance it. Neither is there a dramatic shortage of materials. Nor, with specific exceptions in the South East, are there shortages of workers. The greatest potential constraint is time. Companies need a prolonged stable demand growth pattern to plan for a continuous expansion of capacity. Violent gyrations in new order flows whether domestic or exports need to be avoided. This in turn means that exchange rates and interest rates need to be relatively stable and suggests that there are as many dangers in allowing rates to be too high as there are in allowing them to be too low. Policy then becomes one of ensuring a demand growth profile which is stable, probably around 3-3½ per cent p.a.

Does this mean that we now need a hand on the tiller to ensure that domestic growth does not overstep this mark? There are a good many people who believe that a modest rise in interest rates is now justified on these grounds. Sam Brittan of the *Financial Times* became a market talking point last week by suggesting just this. However, his argument was also based on the idea that market participants need to understand that interest rates are now very volatile. Since this has been precisely the pattern over the last three years I doubt that they need reminding.

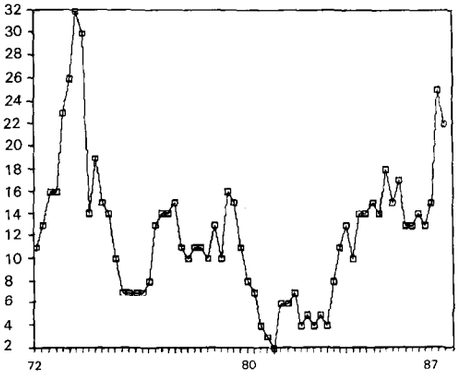
The real question I feel is that interest rates may not be the right policy instrument to tackle this problem. A modest rise in short-term interest rates would have very little impact on the housing market. In fact, it is noticeable that the larger and newer mortgage lenders are falling over themselves to reduce mortgage rates. Moreover, subsidised mortgage rates by employers and not just the government are becoming standard features of employment contracts along with company cars. Indeed, one of the under-estimated impacts of Big Bang and the consequent takeover of smaller security firms by larger commercial banks is that the availability of mortgages has been increased dramatically. People effectively paying a fixed 3, 4 or 5 per cent for their mortgage are indifferent to market rates rising.

THE MOST relevant argument for raising interest rates would be that it would encourage saving in preference to spending. Here too I feel the argument begins to fall down. I doubt whether people's attitudes to savings are quite as they were five years ago. After a series of tax changes and fiscal inducements people are now encouraged to take risks with their savings. Indeed, over the last few years, in contrast to the entire post-war period, individuals have been given greater tax reliefs to invest in companies rather than houses. Personal Equity Plans, Business Expansion Schemes, privatisation issues and a whole range of start-up projects are contributing to a change in savings patterns. This is a healthy development, but it does mean that people are less sensitive to shifts in interest rates than to shifts in the level of the stock market.

It may make more sense therefore to increase these tax incentives to dampen demand through higher savings. This is best left to the Budget judgment for 1988 than anything that can be brought in before that.

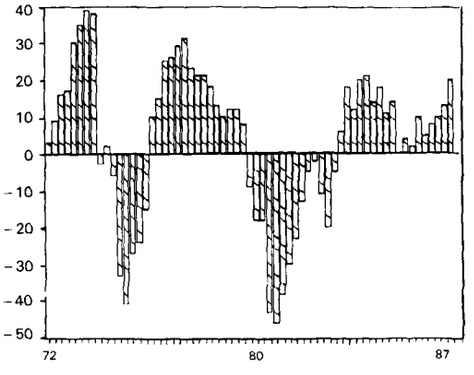
One is left with the conclusion that a major dampening down of demand is unnecessary and that interest rates are not the best way of achieving it anyway. For if the UK is enjoying a genuine supply-led recovery — and I believe it is — the area we should really focus on is investment rather than consumption. Here there could be something to worry about. The downturn during the 1970s forced many capital goods industries to retrench. Some are only just recovering. They simply do not have the capacity to meet any explosion in demand. Their reaction will be to raise profit margins and increase prices. It is quite conceivable that *capital* goods inflation will head towards 10 per cent p.a. over the next year. Whether this triggers a consumer price response via a profits/wages link is not clear. Certainly it is advisable to encourage profit-related pay schemes in these circumstances. The lags, however, are long and not well defined. The *threat* of overheating may therefore be with us for some time. □

1. Plant at full capacity



Per cent of CBI respondents citing plant capacity as a constraint on output

2. Investment intentions



Per cent balance of CBI respondents intending to invest more in plant and machinery

Michael Hughes is executive director, Barclays de Zoete Wedd Gilts Limited.

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INTERVIEW

The practice of possibility

'His assertion of possibility, against all the learned habits of resignation and scepticism . . . is a definition of practical hope.' **RAYMOND WILLIAMS'** *comment on Rudolf Bahro in 1980 could also be applied to his own work over nearly three decades — whether as literary critic, media analyst, novelist or political philosopher. Here he talks to* **TERRY EAGLETON** *about his career and commitment — and about a continuing optimism, in the worst of times*

Terry Eagleton: You retired from the chair of drama at Cambridge University in 1983, after a long career on the political left which still continues. You fought Fascism in Europe, and took a major role in the creation of the early New Left and the early years of CND. Since then you've been involved in a whole series of socialist interventions, both inside and outside the Labour Party, and your intellectual work — what you've come to call 'cultural materialism' — has transformed the thinking of generations of students and workers in the cultural field.

It would have been nice to have been able to present you on your retirement, not with a gold clock, but with a socialist society. It's arguable, however, that such a goal is now as remote, if not more so, as at any time in your political career. Instead we are witnessing the most viciously anti-working-class regime of most people's political memory, the laying of the groundwork of a police state, and an apparently baffled left opposition. Militarily speaking we live in the most terrible danger. Could I ask you, then, whether after so long a struggle you now feel in any sense disillusioned? What are your political thoughts and hopes, immediately after the election of a third Thatcher government?

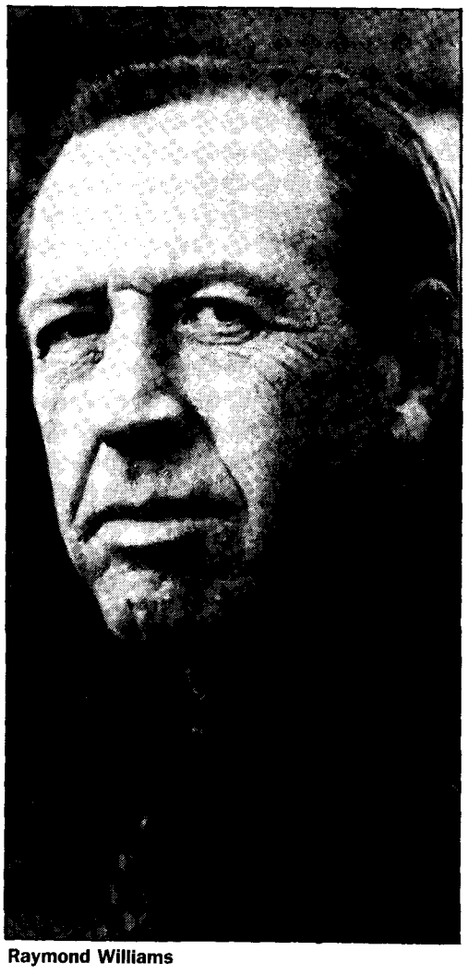
Raymond Williams: Disillusionment, not at all; disappointment, of course. Yet looking back it seems to me I absorbed some of these disappointments quite early on, so the recent ones didn't come as so much of a surprise. Indeed I was so thrown out of my early expectations, as a young man and a soldier in the war, by the events of 1947 that I went into a kind of retreat for a year or two, trying to work out a different kind of intellectual project, which also involved a sense of what a different political project might be. This was a time, remember, when the expectations of a Labour government, which had been the whole perspective of my childhood, had been not just disappointed but actively repulsed: the priority of the military alliance with the USA over Labour's quite real achievements in welfare, the use of troops against groups of striking workers and so on. So the crisis for me was an early one; and perhaps this partly explains why the crisis of 1956 didn't come as so much of a shock for me as it did for some of those intellectuals who had stayed in the Communist Party. There was then a sense of reinvigoration in the late 1950s, which carried on throughout the '60s in the various attempts at some new gathering of left forces. When that went down, in 1970, there was of course a sense of setback and defeat; but I think that whole history had prepared me emotionally and intellectually for the failures which the left was then to go through.

When all of this passed into the period of open reaction of the Thatcher governments, it seemed to me that the left was repeatedly trying to reconstitute the very limited kind of hope that I'd repeatedly seen fail. The rhetoric of victory in 1945 is in a sense fair enough, but it shouldn't convince anyone unless it is immediately qualified by the realities of 1947-8. The rhetoric of the (supposedly) successful Labour governments of the 1960s is for me similarly qualified by the events of 1968 — that very confused time in which the attempt to feed new currents of ideas and feelings into the labour movement was not merely ignored but, again, actually repulsed.

Today, it's clearer to me than ever that the socialist analysis is the correct one, and its correctness has been in my view repeatedly demonstrated. But the perspectives which had sustained the main left organisations were simply not adequate to the society they were seeking to change. There was always the attempt on the left to reconstitute old models: the notion of 'uniting Britain', to take an example from recent electoral rhetoric, or of an autonomous sovereign economy — as if what's happened in international capitalism over the past 40 years simply hadn't happened. When they fight in these terms, what can and should be fought for becomes much more difficult to define.

TE: What then should be fought for? Are you suggesting a wholly different strategy for the left?

RW: The strategy is all still to be found, but what blocks it, I'm saying, is this old model of creating a relatively powerful, united Britain with a 'successful' sovereign economy. That, I think, is what history has ruled out. And one consequence of this has been a retreat to certain areas, traditional strongholds of labour: Scotland, Wales, the north of England. But the shape of a genuine strategy would be to pass beyond this idea of altering such situations only in Britain. To adopt at least a west European perspective, where there are many people and regions in similar situations, penetrated and distorted by international capitalism and the military alliance. Any useful strategy would involve a great building up of autonomy in such regions in Britain, but instead of orienting that to the British state, looking out for the connections which can be made to western Europe, at least in the first instance.



Raymond Williams

The obvious block to this is the electoral system which imposes the need for a national party — 'national' on this superannuated model of the British state. There follows the necessity for a coalition of left forces which everyone knows is impossible to sustain honestly. The range of opinion from liberal to far left is just too broad. Socialists want to take part in defeating something uniquely vicious, and so must be friendly to the labour right, or to liberals, social democrats, even progressive Tories; but if you do so pretending that you share their perspective then you fail in one of your most basic duties: telling the truth as you see it.

Meanwhile a major obstacle to any socialist strategy is that the left makes repeated attempts to remake the whole Labour Party in its own image, as distinct from maintaining, within present constraints, a socialist element. In practice, this has prevented the Labour Party from achieving the kind of unity it needs for the limited jobs it has to do. But it also means a limitation on the amount of absolutely straight socialist argument and propaganda, under the pretence of consensus. When one hears a Labour candidate, as mine did, talking about loyalty to NATO, building up a fine

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fleet and the rest, one knows one simply isn't living in the same world with people with whom otherwise one's prepared to be comradely and co-operative, for specific objectives. Yet while the left still sees the wholesale conversion of a social democratic party to a socialist party as its objective, there's an important sense in which it silences itself.

If we had proportional representation, what we would rapidly get is a realignment of the centre. People talk of a realignment of the left, but what's already beginning to happen is actually a realignment of the centre. Now such a realignment of the centre, which I think is bound to happen, just isn't the left's business. Socialist analysis and propaganda must be made in its own terms. If there *was* a realignment of the centre which took the Labour Party into some unambiguous social democratic phase, there would be in altered electoral conditions a space for some federation of socialist, Green and radical nationalist forces. It wouldn't be electorally insignificant, and above all it would be able to speak up without equivocation for its view of the world, which at present doesn't get through politically very far. It would be dreadful for the left in the Labour Party to try to break it up, weaken it even further, and there's no simple question of a breakaway. But in the situation I'm describing, there will be a possibility of the left speaking in its own voice; and in a political situation as hard as this, that's not to be discounted.

TE: Indeed; though as the crisis of capitalism has tightened, we've been witnessing a steady haemorrhage of intellectuals from the far left. Individuals, groups, journals, whole parties have moved inexorably to the right, and this at a time — a bitter irony — when in a sense there's never been so obviously, so devastatingly what one might describe as a 'total global system', which demands an appropriately radical response. To affirm such a truth in an age of postmodernist fragmentation, however, is becoming increasingly unfashionable. To mention social class in certain so-called left circles is to be unceremoniously shown the door. Defeatism and adaptation, however 'dynamically' and modernistically tricked out, seem instead the order of the day. I once heard you refer in a nicely sardonic phrase to those who 'make long-term adjustments to short-term problems'. I wonder whether it was this treason of the clerks that you had in mind?

RW: Well, the strength of our enemies isn't to be doubted; yet the most intelligent operators of the system itself know just how profoundly unstable it is. The whole future of a US-led, anti-communist, anti-Third World alliance is coming under pressure, if only from its own internal divisions and the increasing inability of the USA to dominate it. The international financial system is a helterskelter economy based on frightening credit expansion and credit risk, which would have terrified an earlier generation of orthodox bankers and financiers. To say this, of course, isn't to advocate some policy of waiting for the crash; for one thing such crashes aren't automatic, and for another thing they're just as likely to produce a hard right well beyond anything we've seen so far.

> ***'People talk of a realignment of the left, but what's already beginning to happen is actually a realignment of the centre. Now such a realignment of the centre, which I think is bound to happen, just isn't the left's business. Socialist analysis and propaganda must be made in its own terms.'***

Those who talk of the hard right in Britain haven't really seen one. But if the system is that unstable, this clearly isn't a world to adjust to. It's not a world in which one has to settle for belonging to an eccentric minority who believe there are old socialist texts and ideas which must be kept alive, in an all too powerful and successful system. Powerful, yes; successful, no.

Meanwhile what's happened in so-called 'actually existing socialism' in eastern Europe has done the left more damage than can be properly accounted for. It's been a key feature in many intellectual desertions, and one difficult to argue against since of course one endorses the denunciation of terror, while recalling that such terror is in fact historically outweighed by the long, systematic terror of the right. If it were a reason to desert socialism, because such terrible things have happened in its name, it would be a reason to desert every system we know. The eastern European societies, however, aren't going to remain in their present condition; they know they can't sustain themselves without radical change. And this will be a positive factor for socialist intellectuals in the West.

TE: It would sometimes seem today that a commitment to class struggle on the one hand, and a celebration of difference and plurality on the other, have been lined up on opposite sides of the left political fence. Yet both ways of thinking would seem to have subtly co-existed in your own work almost from the beginning. You've always deeply suspected closed, monolithic theories and strategies, and from the outset your socialism has stressed difficulty, complexity, variety; yet, not least in your development over the past decade or so, in the very period of some other left intellectuals' sail-trimming or simply renegacy, you would seem to hold firmly to a class perspective. How do you see the relation between these two emphases?

RW: I've always been very aware of the complicated relationships between class and place. I've been enormously conscious of place, and still get an extraordinary amount of emotional confirmation from the sense of place and its people. Now the key argument in Marxism was always whether the proletariat would be a universal class — whether the bonds it forged from a common exploitation would be perceived as primary, and eventually supersede the more local bonds of region or nation or religion. On the one hand the recognition of exploitation continually reproduces class consciousness and organisation on a universal basis. On the other hand, I don't know of any prolonged struggle of that kind in which these other issues haven't been vital, and in some cases decisive. So I'm on both sides of the argument, yes: I recognise the universal forms which spring from this fundamental exploitation — the system, for all its local variety, is everywhere recognisable. But the practice of fighting against it has always been entered into, or sometimes deflected, by these other kinds of more particular bonds.

TE: Which of course vitally include gender. In your book *The Long Revolution*, right back in 1961 and long before the resurgence of the contemporary women's movement, you identified what you saw then as four interlocking systems within any society, and named one of them as the 'system of generation and nurture'. Yet your theoretical work would seem to have preserved a relative silence on those issues; instead, perhaps, they have tended to take up home in your fiction, in which the family, generation and their connections to work and politics have figured prominently.

RW: That's true. It's really all in my second novel, *Second Generation*; that's what it was really all about. But at about the same time I was writing *The English Novel from Dickens to Lawrence*, where I describe the Brontë sisters as representing interests and values marginalised by the male hegemony. Not only that, however, but representing human interests of a more general kind which showed up the limits of the extraordinarily disabling notion of masculinity. I remember how I used to embarrass students in my lectures, you will doubtless remember this, by suggesting it would be interesting to locate the historical moment when men stopped crying in public. The suppression of tenderness and emotional response, the willingness to admit what isn't weakness — one's feelings in and through another: all this is a repression not only of women's experience but of something much more general. And I suppose I found it easier to explore that in more personal terms, in my novels. That's no real excuse: I ought to have been doing this in my other work too; but by the time I came to understand it in that way it was already being done by a lot of good people who were no doubt making more sense of it than I could have done.

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TE: The media, or communications as you prefer to call them, have long formed a centrepiece of your work. Although the whole concept of 'media' is surely much too passive to convey the enormous power of these institutions. The editors of the *Sun, Mail* and *Express* were surely infinitely more important to Thatcher in the election than any members of her inner circle, and ought to be buried in Westminster Abbey. I mean as soon as possible. How are we to go about combatting this formidable source of political power?

RW: Well, one can talk of course of education — of arming people's minds against that kind of journalism. But there's now been a sustained cultural attempt to show how this manipulation works, which has hardly impinged on its actual power. I don't see how the educational response can be adequate. The manipulative methods are too powerful, too far below the belt for that. These people have to be driven out. We have to create a press owned by and responsible to its readers. The increasing concentration of power in the media has been a process strangely unresisted by socialists, by the labour movement as a whole, who have actually let go of key sectors. When I was concentrating on this kind of cultural analysis in the 1950s I was sometimes told by good Marxist friends that it was a diversion from the central economic struggle. Now every trade union and political leader cries 'The media, the media'. It was correctly foreseen that this, in electoral politics, was where the battle would be fought, but the response to that was very belated. The proposals which I put forward in my book *Communications* in the early 1960s, for democratic control of the media, still seem to me a necessary programme.

> ***'History, as Walter Benjamin might have put it, is more barbarism than progress; what you and I might consider moral and political virtue has never ruled any social order . . .'***

TE: We both hail originally from the Celtic fringes, and both of us, relatively late in life, began turning back to those roots. You have turned increasingly to Wales both in your fictional and political work; it took us both such a long time to look back to the margins because, as students of English, we'd had our heads well and truly fixed by an ideology of 'Englishness'. You still have close, active relations, personally and politically, with Wales. Is this marginality a source of strength in your work? Or is it simply convenient to have, so to speak, a different passport and identity when one sallies forth among the middle-class English natives?

RW: I think some of my Welsh friends would be kind enough to say that if I have some importance for them it's precisely because I came out — because I went among the English, and got a hearing, even recognition, in their own institutions. When you're part of one of these disadvantaged nationalities you can be very bitter about people who have gone off and made it elsewhere, but it can be different if you also know they still relate to you, even if one has crossed the border rather than remained inside it. In that sense I don't altogether regret crossing the border, though there are times when I do. Coming from a border area of Wales in any case, the problem for me has always been one of what it was to be Welsh — I mean in some serious sense, rather than in one of the exportable stage Welsh versions. I suppose there was some group I thought of as the *real* Welsh, secure in their identity, who would come out in force and flail this returning migrant with all his doubts.

The response I've had, especially from young Welsh people, has been precisely the opposite: thank God someone has come out and asked who are we, what are we? All my usual famous qualifying and complicating, my insistence on depths and ambiguities, was exactly what they already knew. And this experience of ambiguity and contradiction hasn't only equipped us in Wales to understand our own situation better; it's also equipped us, emotionally and intellectually, to understand the situation of increasing numbers of people — including the once so self-assured, confident English. It's easier for us, in other words, to put questions to those simple, confident, unitary identities which really belong to an earlier historical period.

TE: Let me return finally to where we began, with the question of disappointment or despondency. What you say about the need to reject any kind of disillusion strikes me as absolutely right. Your work has always seemed to me distinguished by a kind of steady, profound humanism, which it would be too facile to describe as optimism. Beneath your political writing has always run this confident trust in human capacities — capacities so steadfast and enduring that not to see them finally triumph in some political future would seem not only unthinkable but, as it were, blasphemous. Perhaps I share that belief; but let me put to you, in the spirit of devil's advocacy, an alternative scenario. The historical record shows that such capacities have so far always been defeated. History, as Walter Benjamin might have put it, is more barbarism than progress; what you and I might consider moral and political virtue has never ruled any social order, other than briefly and untypically. The real historical record is one of wretchedness and unremitting toil; and 'culture' — your and my speciality — has its dubious roots in this. How then are we to undo such a history with the very contaminated instruments it has handed us? Is socialism, in other words, anything more than a wishful thinking which runs quite against the historical grain? To put the point more personally: how far is your own trust in human creative capacities in part the product of an unusually warm and affectionate working-class childhood, of which it's in some sense the nostalgic memory?

RW: It's true that much of my political belief is a continuation of a very early formation. I can't remember any time when I haven't felt broadly speaking as I do now, except for the period of retreat I mentioned in the 1940s, which in a sense was a kind of cancellation of the certainties I'd assumed in childhood. I ceased then to be simply a product of that culture; I don't know what I became a product of, since I couldn't accept the offered alternatives. Out of that period of radical dislocation was rebuilt what was, and I think still is, an *intellectual* conviction. Though of course it can't ever be only that. The crisis which came to me on the death of my father, who was a socialist and a railway worker — I haven't been able to explain this to people properly, perhaps I explained it partly in my novel *Border Country* — was the sense of a kind of defeat for an idea of value. Maybe this was an unreasonable response. All right, he died, he died too early, but men and women die. But it was very difficult not to see him as a victim at the end. I suppose it was this kind of experience which sent me in the end to the historical novel I'm now writing, *People of the Black Mountains*, about the movements of history over a very long period, in and through a particular place in Wales. And this history is a record of all you say: of defeat, invasion, victimisation, oppression. When one sees what was done to the people who are physically my ancestors, one feels it to be almost incredible.

What do I get from this? Simply the confidence of survival? Yes, that in part. There's been a quite extraordinary process of self-generation and regeneration, from what seemed impossible conditions. Thomas Becket once asked a shrewd, worldly-wise official on the Marches about the nature of the Welsh. 'I will show you the curious disposition of the Welsh', said the official, 'that when you hold the sword they will submit, but when they hold the sword they assert themselves'. I like the deep, pokerfaced joke of that. The defeats have occurred over and over again, and what my novel is then trying to explore is simply the condition of anything surviving at all. It's not a matter of the simple patriotic answer: we're Welsh, and still here. It's the infinite resilience, even deviousness, with which people have managed to persist in profoundly unfavourable conditions, and the striking diversity of the beliefs in which they've expressed their autonomy. A sense of a value which has won its way through different kinds of oppression in different forms.

If I say, estimating, for example, whether we'll avoid a nuclear war, 'I see it as 50-50', I instantly make it 51-49, or 60-40, the wrong way. That is why I say we must speak for hope, as long as it doesn't mean suppressing the nature of the danger. I don't think my socialism is simply the prolongation of an earlier experience. When I see that childhood coming at the end of millennia of much more brutal and thoroughgoing exploitation, I can see it as a fortunate time: an ingrained and indestructible yet also changing embodiment of the possibilities of common life. □

Raymond Williams' Culture and Society *and* Drama from Ibsen to Brecht *are reissued by Hogarth Press this month. Terry Eagleton's first novel,* Saints and Scholars, *is published by Verso in September.*

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ARTS

DANCE

A time and a place

Stephanie Jordan

Merce Cunningham Dance Company
Sadler's Wells
Royal Ballet
Battersea Big Top

UNDOUBTEDLY, THE PAST fortnight has been the best of the dance year, with the Merce Cunningham Dance Company back and a new ballet by Ashley Page: at last, a younger-generation Royal Ballet choreographer of real imagination.

The continuing fertility of **Merce Cunningham**'s creative spirit can only be wondered at and, this year, in a range of circumstances: a TV commission, a piece in the Proms, a two week season at Sadler's Wells. As he was the first major choreographer to have collaborated with the TV medium on its own terms, it is to the credit of the BBC that they commissioned *Points in Space* (producer Bob Lockyer). More than anything *Points* demonstrates the drama between camera and dancer — the power of the rush into and past the lens, of the withdrawal of the camera from its prey — making dancing in the far distance a lively rather than wearisome experience, not forgetting the magic of the roving camera 'chancing' on dancers in their seamless, glowing environment (designs by William Anastasi and Dove Bradshaw). The TV rectangle is revitalised, too: filled, underscored, then suddenly demolished by part of a body in close-up, casting a new edge or frame.

For the Proms, *Roaratorio, an Irish Circus on Finnegan's Wake* is unusual both in scale (the large space required, its one hour duration) and in creative procedure, Cage having completed the music as a radio play before Cunningham choreographed it. The sound environment is Cage at his most far-ranging: live and recorded texts developed from reading the *Wake*; sounds from places mentioned in Joyce's text in multiphonic echo; a baby crying, sirens, traffic, a radio; and fragments of traditional music, fiddle, drums, pipes and flute played by the Irish musicians who border the dancing space.

If all human life is there in the music, the same is true of Cunningham's dance. Among the jigs and waltzes and their close relative, the steppy Cunningham vocabulary, there is revelry, courtship and anguish, innocence and maturity, and a journey in space and time as the dancers gradually shift their resting-stools across the stage. The piece is perfect for the Royal Albert Hall arena. With that emphatic open-field multi-directionality of Cunningham's non-proscenium pieces, it seems to spill out beyond the dancing territory and even skywards. This is a piece that engages with its surroundings.

Robert Swinston: one of Cunningham's finest

In the intimacy of Sadler's Wells, Cunningham's work takes on a clearer, more printed appearance. Now, despite the famed openness of his work — both to unrelated designs and music and to audience interpretation — I am aware of the clearly delimited dance premises for each piece and the distinctiveness of mood that this spectator, at least, in inclined to understand. It is Cunningham's choreography by 'moments' that proves the potency of these premises — moments of power, a lift that springs from nowhere, a surprising grouping surprisingly formed, a familiar move made exceptional by a partner's enlargement of it — moments that become crucial to the larger rhythmic shaping of a piece. The dance premise in the new *Shards* is the presence of the full cast on stage throughout until the final moments, bound together in the stage frame and in the movement connections across dancers that later embrace the whole ensemble. Simple, but Cunningham has turned this into a desolate statement, with splintered outbursts like psychotic isolations in a timeless, rhythmless world system. The violent staccato makes curves and falls expressionist, except here they are spaced and timed as postmodern fragmentation and the connections between individuals are correspondingly ambiguous.

Fabrications (also 1987) looks at the world in its urban aspect, the dancers in everyday dress and with distant hints of music and radio in Emanuel de Melo Pimenta's score. Again, alienation is emphasised. Solos and duets are barred from large groups, and dancers race and split from each other. There is a terrible heaviness to the *adage*. The most poignant moments are those involving Merce himself, briefly caught in one chance relationship (enlivening the upstage as he always does), faced with another, but abruptly turning his back to voyage onwards alone.

Humour is not lost. The recent *Grange Eve*

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draws on *Roaratorio*-style social language and turns out to be the whackiest of hoedowns: a bizarre drunk solo for Rob Remley freefalling about the stage in waves of pure momentum, Merce rubbing an occasional shoulder with the youngsters, much out of time, much out of line, disruptive and happily so.

Cunningham's dancers at present are the finest. Theirs is the concentrated performance that brings personal meaning to every move, true to the choreography, but enlivened by an imaginative charge. They also have a peculiar grace: it derives from their peace in precarious circumstances, a miraculous security on ¾ *pointe* and their poise and gentility when the pressure is extreme.

Clearly, the density that Cunningham brought to choreography has infected Ashley Page's work. His new *Pursuit* for the **Royal Ballet** is as complex a work as you are likely to see, with brilliant, assertive designs by Jack Smith; it also exploits the possibility of dance pushing on at its own energy, often regardless of Colin Matthew's music. Yet this is also a classical piece, governed by principles of formal clarity and, as much as the dancers exist in flurries of crazy counterpoint and quirky, ironic reversals of proper classical behaviour, so they are tidied up at intervals into lines and blocks, and the work is cleverly paced to end with a slow, intriguing and thoroughly legible duet.

Pursuit is, in every respect, a genuine ballet of our time, aiming high and introducing strong, modern women who engage forcefully and intelligently with their partners and making the whole 12-strong ensemble compete far more vigorously for our attention than is usual. □

TELEVISION

Naughty Rosemary

Diane Abbott

BBC2'S **EYE TO EYE** looked at an interesting subject this week — the role of the black churches in Britain. It was made by black filmmakers. But, perhaps because they were all BBC-trained, they revealed a rigid adherence to a white agenda and the standard visual clichés about black people. So there were too many shots of black people jigging about, too much totally gratuitous news footage of black people rioting and too little analysis.

The programme never explained, for instance, that the emergence of the black church was partly a response to the racism that early black immigrants met in the mainstream churches. The attraction of the black church for the black communities, particularly the middle-aged women who are its mainstay, is all too rational. In lives full of back-breaking work in menial jobs and the fears, humiliations and disappointments of being black in a racist society, the church offers its followers: a social life; the chance to relate to other black people; the opportunity to use their organisational and other talents and to assert themselves in socially sanctioned ways. But, above all, the church gives them a sense of joy and a sense of worth.

Eye to Eye's film failed to get to grips with this central reality. It also failed to examine why the black church in Britain seems to de-mobilise and de-politicise its followers while, in America, the black church has been a basic unit of political organisation from the days of Congressman Adam Clayton-Powell — 'Keep the faith baby' — whose political base was his Harlem congregation, through to the Reverend Jesse Jackson. But you almost forgave the filmmakers everything for the closing minutes of the Bethel Church choir in action. Even for a resolute unbeliever, there can be no more exhilarating sound than a really good black gospel choir.

Neighbours (BBC1) is an Australian soap opera which forms one of the cornerstones of the BBC's daytime schedule. It is very reminiscent of *Crossroads*: the sets look as if they are about to fall down; it is so badly shot and directed that the scenes look as if they are taking place in a cardboard box; and the cast all mouth their lines in a wary and uncomfortable way as if they had seen them for the first time that morning.

The episode I saw featured a feminist called Rosemary. She was unhappy in love, a successful businesswoman and caused trouble and confusion by telling the women of the family that they did not have to do all the cooking and cleaning and washing-up.

But the episode had a happy ending. The mother finally said, diffident but brave, 'I *enjoy* being the head cook and bottle washer.' And Rosemary was all contrition: 'I am sorry I brought disharmony into the household . . .'

The BBC's **Nine O' Clock News** was very average this week, but then so was **News At Ten**. There is a fashionable myth that there is something chronically wrong with BBC news and current affairs. The truth is that, at its best, the BBC can still knock spots off ITV, as their election coverage proved. But the Beeb has been a victim of a vicious and sustained campaign by Mrs Thatcher and newspaper owners like Murdoch, whose big interests in cable and satellite mean that he will make substantial profits from the break-up of public service broadcasting. So BBC news and current affairs are now being 're-organised' in rather the way that Pol Pot 're-organised' Cambodia.

The changes are not all bad. A black man — Samir Shah — and a woman — Jenny Abramsky — have been appointed to plum posts in senior mainstream management. But one of the fears is that the new regime is going to be very unwilling to stand up to the government. And the recent dropping of a film on Peter Wright, on which thousands had already been spent, seems to bear this suspicion out.

One thing I couldn't bring myself to watch was **TV AM**. For two years I was a journalist there. I wrote scripts by night and was a Westminster City councillor by day and felt tired all the time. To this day, just the sound of its opening title music makes me feel ill and tired as if I have been up all night.

I remember when Peter Jay, the original chief executive and managing director, left. I was talking to a board member (it was a very egalitarian company in the early days) and we were pondering Jay's downfall. 'It's a funny thing about Peter Jay,' I said. 'We (meaning the journalists) all knew he knew nothing about television but we assumed that he knew all about business.'

The board member looked surprised. 'That's funny,' he said. 'We (meaning the *TV AM* board) knew he knew nothing about business but we thought he knew all about television.' □

Diane Abbott is MP for Hackney North and Stoke Newington. She'll be back in this space next week.

THEATRE

Side by side by Slavkin

Victoria Radin

Follies
STEPHEN SONDHEIM and JAMES GOLDMAN
Shaftesbury Theatre
Cerceau
VIKTOR SLAVKIN *Riverside Studios*

IN THE COPY of *The Stephen Sondheim Songbook*, which sits, grey with use and tears, on top of my piano, Sheridan Morley describes this poet of contemporary manners as 'the nearest the theatre has ever got to a *New Yorker* cartoon'. By that he means a compliment — elegance, economy of means, wit, shrewdness and, yes, sophistication. We don't see yokels in the *New Yorker*; nor do we hear — though it's possible they may yet come — prairie folk singing 'O-Oaklahoma!' in a Sondheim musical comedy. Even that term is wrong, for Sondheim's are musical tragi-comedies. Nor has he given us cats, phantoms or singing nuns.

Sondheim has given us a few dogs — I found *Sunday in the Park with George*, his meditation on the artist in society, empty and pretentious. But there is none better at describing the emotional machinery of urban man and woman — with its user-unfriendly remote controls, its unfathomable complexity, its failure to make a harmonious whole. Put another way, he inhabits the same ground as Woody Allen (though on a higher plane): a world of ambiguity, defensiveness, pain and anger. Anger? Sondheim knows more about naked, unappeasable rage than any songwriter who ever lived. In **Follies**, Diana Rigg sings 'Could I Leave You?': 'Could I live through the pain/On a terrace in Spain?/Would it pass?/It would pass./Could I bury my rage/With a boy half your age/In the grass?/Bet your ass.' She sings it with conviction.

Follies (the title connotes a troupe of girls *à la* Ziegfield, a beautifully useless building, madness and also delight) was produced on Broadway in 1971. Despite a handful of Tony Awards, it lost money, and didn't travel. Mike Okrent's magnificent new London production, with exquisitely inventive sets by Maria Bjornsen, is its first London staging as well as its first major revival; the book has been completely rewritten from what Sondheim (composer and lyricist) and James Goldman (writer) describe as the original's 'rather bleak, corrosive and disturbing exploration of two modern marriages.' Glory be, it is still bleak, corrosive and disturbing.

Follies is set at a reunion of showgirls 30 years on, in a theatre about to crumble under the builder's ball. It is not about these women as individuals, or even specifically about show business, but about archetypal emotional patterns

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Julia McKenzie, Lynda Baron and Diana Rigg: surviving their *Follies*

which are depicted not by dialogue (which nearly vanishes in the second half anyway) but by the traditionally magical property of song. In a sense, Sondheim makes a ritual of our emotional confusion: we go to *Follies* to worship and be exorcised.

Two of the ex-chorines are delineated, but only in terms of their marriages. Phyllis (Rigg) has a sterile and certainly bleak union with Ben (Daniel Massey), a prominent stockbroker. Sally (the multi-talented Julia McKenzie) has an apparently contented marriage with her Arizona rancher husband Buddy (David Healy, touchingly Mr Average not-so-nice-guy) but has yearned all those years for Ben, who created the flames by bedding and then rejecting her. During the course of the evening their . . . Passion? not quite. Sympathy? not in any true sense. Perhaps — curiosity is rekindled. It is one of the immensely satisfying ideas in the show that, given a second chance, Ben of course rejects Sally again. The new ending has the foursome squaring up to accepting what they've got.

Perhaps the only thing to do would be to enclose a record of the score with this column, rather like the happier days of *Private Eye*. The tunes mockingly intensify the irony of the words and, as they themselves often pastiche the golden oldies of Gershwin, Kern, Porter and Berlin, extend the sense of double view still further. Whitened, svelte ghosts of their younger days attend the four principals and eventually even converse with them, causing a discomfiting plurality of selfhood. The songs range from a description of Ms McKenzie's daily battle with her obsession for Ben ('Losing my Mind') to her dulcet lie to him that 'In Buddy's Eyes' she's forever young, beautiful, terrific; to Dolores Gray's nearly casual but literally show-stopping assertion of survival, 'I'm Still Here', to what has to be the best ever crystallisation in song of ambivalence, Buddy's vaudevillian turn between his boring mistress and his exigent wife in 'God why don't you love me/Oh you do, I'll see you later/Blues'. The emotions aren't pretty; the sense of disillusion and moral chaos is strong; and perhaps we shouldn't be applauding mere survival. Sondheim has been shredded by John Lahr in his essay in *Automatic Vaudeville* for being a 'gourmand of griefs'. But would Lahr do the same to Chekov or Beckett? Why should the musical tell a different story than non-musical drama or literature? There is grace in the recognition of what we really are.

The seven characters of Viktor Slavkin's **Cerceau** batter their way out of a boarded-up dacha to come to a similar but even darker conclusion about life. All are single; one was once the girlfriend of Petushok, the man who gathers them in the house he has inherited; one is a colleague; another was once married (for eight days) to the late owner of the house; and the others are odd bods picked up here and there. Thrown together by slightly devious means to make what Petushok hopes will eventually form a sort of ongoing weekend community, they play games (including the hoop ceremony of the title), read old love letters, recite new ones, tell their stories (true and phony), flirt with fliration, and leave. Anyone who thinks Sondheim writes about a purely Western malaise would have been disabused by this hit of the London International Festival of Theatre.

Anatoli Vasiljev's quite stunningly beautiful production, which began life at the formerly avant-garde Taganka Theatre in Moscow, sets the dacha between a two-sided audience and makes us watch much of the play through its windows. Jazz of all sorts drifts from within; a man who claims he's Swedish does a vaudeville turn; the characters dance. The director has claimed that his inspiration was Renoir (a sadder, bitterer *La Règle du Jeu*?) but I saw Fellini. The tone is of the soft shoe shuffle on the way to the funeral — as *Follies* is more obliquely, it is an obituary not just of a people but of a nation. It is gorgeously performed, in the flamboyant Russian manner. □

CINEMA

Race and the BFI

Judith Williamson

THERE HAS BEEN much anxiety recently about the future of the British Film Institute's anti-racism policy, following persistent rumours that the Institute's post of Ethnic Advisory Officer — currently held by Jim Pines — is to be dissolved.

At a time when the growth of black film and video work is one of the most important developments in British film culture, especially within the independent sector which relies heavily on the BFI for support, the value of an advisory post at a senior level within the Institute itself can't be underestimated.

The black film workshops such as Sankofa, Ceddo and Black Audio — whose work has been reviewed in this column — are in some ways one of the legacies of cultural policies instigated by the metropolitan councils, especially the GLC.

Even though those bodies are themselves now dismantled, their insistent focus on cultural politics and on anti-racist and anti-sexist practices, in the face of hysterical derision from the popular press, created the climate in which posts such as that at the BFI could be set up — a climate which, unfortunately, is already changing rapidly.

The British Film Institute really started to engage with these issues at its 1984 conference, where it committed itself to support the emergent black film and video movement and agreed to several demands made by representatives of the black independent sector, co-ordinated through the Association of Black Workshops. It was agreed that the ABW would provide black representation in several areas of the BFI where there had previously been none; that there would be a financial commitment on the part of the Institute to help fund the development of a black/Asian film culture; and that the post of Ethnic Advisory officer would be created within the BFI as a first step towards implementing these policies.

The post was initially created for a two-year period, which is now up. During that time Jim Pines has laid important groundwork in the area of distribution and exhibition of black/Third World films, and has co-ordinated information to make available for the first time a comprehensive black/Asian film and video directory and bibliography. The BFI has taken up his research projects into race and television and organised the internationally attended Third Cinema conference at last year's Edinburgh Festival, which brought in rarely seen Third World films and filmmakers, and put black British film culture firmly on the world map. The overall effect of these activities has been to give black filmmaking and debates about race and media a higher profile than they have ever had before in this country. The BFI's influence in taking this lead is both direct and indirect: direct in that the activities undertaken are important in themselves, indirect in that the very existence of a post specifically to engage with black/Asian issues serves as a reminder both within the BFI and, by example, to

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other institutions, that these areas can no longer be ignored.

However, the only field in which little, it seems, has been achieved is that of the BFI's own employment policy. Besides Jim Pines there are no black full-time senior — in other words, above secretarial — staff members at the BFI and, if the post occupied by Pines should go, it seems unlikely that there will be continued black employment at this level.

Unfortunately the BFI's commitment to equal opportunities coincides with the current financial trend towards short-term contractual employment.

June Giovanni, the black officer appointed specially to work on the black/Asian directory, was hired on a freelance basis for a fixed period of months only.

Hence the extreme agitation among the black workshop sector at the possibility of a return to the situation which existed before the Ethnic Advisory post was set up. In the recent flurry of action around the issue, the BFI has extended Jim Pines' own employment for a further three months, until the autumn, and provided him with an increased budget to work with during that time. However, this will only postpone the moment when the job finally goes.

Pines has put a strong case for the job's continuance — whether or not he actually stays in it himself.

The Association of Black Workshops and many other interested bodies have expressed the strong view that some such post is still very much needed. Two years is a very short time in which to counteract the long history of racism and invisibility which all areas of black culture have been subject to in this country.

It is no secret that Anthony Smith, the Director of the BFI, would like to see the post phased out, as he personally believes it to be 'no longer necessary'. However when I spoke to him he insisted that no measures concerning the post would be taken without further discussion with all interested parties, and that although the initial two-year period for the Ethnic Advisory post was up, the BFI remained committed to finding 'the best way possible of implementing its equal opportunities policies'. What the best way might be is to be decided, claims Smith, after full consultation with all concerned. It is not clear how 'all concerned' can be defined, but if it includes those for whose benefit the post was set up then such consultation is certain to produce demands for its continuance.

Whether or not these demands are listened to will be an acid test of the BFI's commitment to this all too new, and all too long ignored section of its constituency. □

TRAILERS

The New Vision black media and resource group in Northampton is presenting a season of black independent films at the NCACO Community Centre, Clare Street, Northampton: Menelik Shabazz's *Burning an Illusion* plays on 7 August at 7.30, with actress Cathy MacFarlane as guest speaker; Ahmed Jamal's *Majdhar* plays on 14 August. For further details phone 0604 38011.

WORK IN PROGRESS

Crack in the jewel

Naseem Khan

AND ABOUT TIME TOO. The British in India have had a field day in the media: every bit-player has been filmed ad nauseum about his or her role in the Raj. Now, the Channel 4 film *Division of Hearts* (to be transmitted on 10 August) gives ordinary Indians a voice.

Not about power, but the lack of power, the film focuses on one of the most terrible and extensive mass migrations the world has ever known.

Forty years ago this month India became independent; at the same time, the details of the new Pakistan (details determined in a mere six weeks by Sir Cyril Radcliffe and his committee) were announced. Ten million woke up not to the 'life and freedom' sonorously promised by Nehru, but to the loss of their ancestral homes. Half a million were to lose their lives.

Producers Peter Chappell and Satti Khanna have found some of the ten million and induced them to tell their story. Inevitably this results in a series of talking heads — and a bit more effort could have been spared to fill the political background in for India novices. Nevertheless, the material in the film is so sharp, so poignant, told with such dignity by the now elderly survivors, that qualifications must pale. No records like this have previously been collected and — given the age of its protagonists — this one has come just in time.

The people spoken to were not the centre-stage actors. They were the raw stuff of migration: the people through whose towns and villages, from western Punjab to easten Bengal, Radcliffe's line cut. They were landless peasants, tonga-wallahs, artisans, petty clerks. Chappell and Khanna film them about their ordinary tasks, the regularity of which both gives their words a certain considered quality and contrasts sharply with the anarchy and terror about which they speak.

This is not, however, a film about atrocities. The filmmakers could easily have found worse.

The sheer horror of the refugee trains coming to a silent halt in Delhi or Lahore stations — for all their complements had been slaughtered *en route* — has little to touch it.

Some of the film's spokespeople lost their families in terrible circumstances. A blue-turbanned Sikh recalls the family elders killing all the young in order to prevent them being 'dishonoured' by Muslims. 'We were such a happy family,' he says heavily. A Bengali clerk who reluctantly fled from Noakali to the safety — though penury — of Hindu Calcutta, broke down. 'I cannot remember all these things without tears,' he mutters. More than atrocities, however, *Division of Hearts* is about perplexity and grief. Almost to a man and a woman, the survivors express confusion. One sprightly Sikh fondly remembers his friendships with Muslim children: how could the divisions have come about? But there's no denying that distrust sprang up like bushfire. 'The Muslims,' said one Sikh tersely, 'had different looks in their eyes.' The cry went up, 'The Sikhs are here!' recalls a Muslim. 'We hitched our bullock cart and set out.'

The confusion is the more in that, like peasants the world over, these were accustomed to having the great ones fighting their wars over their land, over their heads. This time things were different. 'Our elders said, "We have seen many kingdoms change. But the way this kingdom changed, we have never heard about. People never had to leave their homes before. Previously rulers changed and things would be upset for a time. And then they'd be all right."' 'We thought,' says a Punjabi woman, a girl at the time, 'that the big people must be in the know.' So little did anyone know that her village thought for two and a half hours that it was going to be in Pakistan, not in India. By the time a phone call had corrected that, the Muslims had turned on the Hindus.

The tragedy of partition absorbs them still today. Leaving places where they'd lived for generations and where their ancestors were buried has proved a trauma. Somehow or other, though, they have survivied. The Sikh described above talks cheerfully about his futile attempts to be a salesman. A penniless migrant talks an old woman — 'I told her, "I've climbed out of a wall and I'm about to fall into an abyss,"' — into taking him in.

Virtually all the testimonies feelingly describe the rupture of old communal harmony between Muslim and Sikh and Hindu — 'It was a time of great peace' — a line that I vividly remember from my father, whose own family mainly left India for Pakistan. It begs, however, the inevitable question as to why, then, partition happened.

'Divide and rule,' say the people in the film, putting the blame entirely at the Brits' door. Undoubtedly this played a part, but cannot be the whole picture. Muslim Leaguer Abdul Qaiyum Khan, in his essay in *The Partition of India*, described a pre-Partition trip he'd made to Sind. 'What I saw and heard . . . was an eye-opener. The Muslims constituted 75 per cent of the population, but they were mainly occupied in menial and low paid jobs. Hindu landlords were extorting rack-rents from the Muslim peasants, while the Muslim landlords were in debt to the Hindu *banias* . . .'

If this has a familiar ring, its echoes can perhaps be found in Cyprus, Northern Ireland, Sri Lanka. The road to partition is shameful one, involving exploitation, distrust and duplicity across the board, Hindu and Muslim. There is room for another film, a companion piece to this, that can look at the true complexity of partition. □

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Books

FICTION

Ornithology

Boyd Tonkin

Blackbird
TONY CARTANO trans. SHEILA FISCHMAN *Secker*
£11.95

IN KAFKA'S STORY *A Report to an Academy* the ape who apes his captors to escape his cage admits that 'there was no attraction for me in imitating human beings. I imitated them because I needed a way out, and for no other reason.' As Walter Benjamin saw, Kafka's characters inhabit a world where they are 'on the stage from the very beginning'. They can hope to outwit oppressors, not by asserting a true self, but by plausible mimicry. Named after one of nature's great impersonators, Tony Cartano's *Blackbird* circles obsessively around Kafka, cages and imitations.

In 1940s New York a hospital psychiatrist, Dr Clockwork, decides to fathom the mystery of one of his in-patients, Anton Huka. Much of the novel consists of Huka's notebooks, which tell the story of a gifted, self-destructive Jewish writer in the Prague and Vienna of the years before and after the fall of the Hapsburg empire. His life echoes at every turn that of the author whose name, in Czech, means Jackdaw.

Unlike Kafka, the Huka ('Blackbird') of the diaries survives tuberculosis, fights in the Spanish Civil War and flees to the USA. There he ekes out a living as a piano teacher until the unfinished business of his own and his generation's fate propels him into a suicide attempt. Among the journal entries lie fragments of a parable, a 'bestiary' in which the blackbird plays the part of prophet and sacrificial victim. This blood-spattered bird-life seems to be teeming with relatives of Ted Hughes's *Crow*.

To Clockwork, the notebooks are the fraud of a well-read lunatic. They crawl with give-away allusions, from Huka's crass father Hermann to his devoted friend Max and emancipated lover Milena. And young Anton appears to have spent his early life dropping names across Europe. When he picks up a dose of clap he consults the wise and tolerant Dr Schnitzler. His first Viennese apartment is (where else?) at 30 Berggasse, 'just a stone's throw from Freud'. On trips to Paris and Berlin he happens to drop in to the right cabaret at the right time to catch the inter-war avant-garde off-guard.

Turning amateur detective, Clockwork devises another biography for Blackbird: as Antoine Choucas, a Satie-like pianist and composer who left France to free himself of an Oedipal trauma. Aware of his hold over the doctor, Huka/Choucas springs more surprises through his diaries as Clockwork scours Europe for clues to his patient's real identity.

First published in France in 1980, *Blackbird* neatly allows Cartano to have his *gâteau* and eat it. Through Huka's narrative he can indulge in a shameless orgy of cultural gossip. This he loads with bravura scene-setting and some fairly trite reflections on the spiritual crisis of the Jewish *intelligentsia* in the decades before Hitler. Part of the book becomes a sort of literary counterpart to those grandiose Beaubourg exhibitions: lavishly-documented, but always apt to smother both creativity and suffering in an all-knowing discourse of modernity.

At the same time, Clockwork's scepticism means that the reader never has to suspend disbelief. His own version draws on the glamorous gloom of Bohemian Europe between the wars almost as heavily as his patient's. In this contest of disguises and impostures the strongest story, not the truest, always wins.

Blackbird fittingly starts and ends in New York, where countless immigrants have shed their skins to find a serviceable alias. Its closing sections hint that Clockwork's professional curiosity may be just as much a borrowed voice as Blackbird's over-heated memories. On a continent of mockingbirds, only the quality of the performance matters. The psychiatrist wonders whether, far from the imprisoning identities of Europe, the blackbird, 'pirate of existence', may become a 'conqueror of dreams' and 'pioneer of new thoughts'. Birds of America, he suggests, may learn to sing their way out of their cages.

For his Blackbird, though, fantasies of the past remain psychotic, not liberating. Fascism and its ensuing guilt and grief have built bars that no acts of imagination can ever break. Shifting from the perspective of doctor to patient and back again, Cartano grows a trifle too artful for his own good. At times, he tries to analyse the urge that drives Huka from the experience of history to the enactment of a myth. Elsewhere, immersed in a Max Ophuls fantasy of *Mitteleurop*, he seems content with a star-struck repetition of it. □

Paul Leser

'The outhouse of the Bauhaus' is how a staff member described Black Mountain College. There's some truth there. The Nazi closure of the Bauhaus in 1933 coincided with plans to open a progressive college in North Carolina; Josef Albers was recruited for Black Mountain, and dominated the college's style for nearly two decades. His formality, both as teacher and artist, often conflicted with more freewheeling ideas; there were also clashes with Southern puritanism, which abominated any deviations from 'clean living'. Such tensions generated a feverish creativity through all crises, until financial difficulty forced closure in 1957. Throughout, the college insisted that the arts, not merely complementary, were the lifeblood of meaningful education. Mary Emma Harris' THE ARTS AT BLACK MOUNTAIN COLLEGE (MIT, £44.95) painstakingly follows these attempts to build a liberal, democratic education, underlining BMC's importance to the American arts — more through its teachers than through its sum total of 1,300 students. John Cage, Buckminster Fuller, Charles Olson, M.C. Richards, Merce Cunningham: dozens of artists evolved ideas there that changed their own work, and the direction of American arts. Unfortunately, Harris' luxuriously illustrated history has its own puritanism, wishing to purge BMC of any 'ideological' taint, instating it as pure thought above left- and right-wing conflict. The immense detail here also obscures the actual work: what you get is who taught what, when, and why they fell out. The feel of the place is glimpsed in incidentals, like a song called 'There Ought to be a Law at Black Mountain Against . . . Well, Something! *Anything*!' Above: Joan Heller, Edward Dorn and Dan Rice, 1951. (Nick Kimberley)

CRITICISM

Father Carey's turkeys

Geoff Dyer

Original Copy: Selected Reviews and Journalism 1969-1986
JOHN CAREY *Faber* £9.95

THE REALLY GREAT thing about John Carey, according to a recent profile in the *Sunday Times*, is not that he is 'the foremost critic of our times' but that he is 'the people's critic'. Who these people are — and whether or not they were consulted on the matter — isn't mentioned, but presumably they're the good folk who peruse the book pages of the *Sunday Times* (not a paper one thinks of immediately as an organ of the people) which has served as Carey's main outlet for the last decade or so. Now for some people Raymond Williams might have seemed a more deserving recipient of this kind of praise but the irony involved here is fittingly Careyesque.

Carey is the quintessential critic for Sunday papers whose review pages serve as a staging post

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between the long haul of the news and the pull-out history of ratatouille through the ages in the colour supplement. In the introduction to this selection of his journalism Carey notes that one of the aims of book reviewing is to try to win back 'a large potential readership of ordinary intelligent people'. The purpose of the Sunday reviews as far as a significant number of their readers is concerned, though, is to save them having to read the books. Carey's speciality is literary biography, 2,000 words of précis and piss-take from which the 'ordinary' reader can learn all s/he wants about Chesterton, Lowell or whoever. Not surprisingly most of the subjects of these biographies are dead, but what *is* surprising is how few of the books featured in *Original Copy* are of much interest to people like . . . well, people like me. Most of them seem pretty dull. These are not so much the books the reading public likes as books on which a parochial and largely anti-intellectual literary establishment — and the 'quality' Sundays are pretty near the core of this hermetic consensus — have conveyed undue value.

In his books on Donne and Dickens, Carey has proved himself a fine and serious critic but in these pieces there is very little criticism. There are scattered insights and formulations plus the expected swipes at structuralism (ludicrously dismissed as the idea that 'literary texts ought to mean anything we require them to, or that authors do not create their works but are created by them') but the chief trait here is fluency and wit, both of which Carey possesses in abundance.

He is particularly sharp about 'the limp-wristed exquisites' who dominated English cultural life from the end of World War I to the 1950s and his sympathy for those on the receiving end of this power elicits our allegiance. Not that Carey wants to be enlisted into any kind of political allegiance. The 'socialist' policy of converting grammar schools into comprehensives will, he says, have the unfortunate effect of turning Oxford once again into a playground for public schools. That the problem might be Oxford's rather than the comprehensives' doesn't seem to occur to him. The spuriousness of '30s intellectual life, Carey also notes, 'is still perfectly observable in English left-wing intellectuals today'. What upsets him about the latter is that they are out of touch with the 'ordinary', 'decent', 'bread-earning', 'responsible' , 'normal', 'hard-working' citizens (these phrases come up again and again) who make up Carey's socio-moral constituency. Hence Oxford dons are derided for their smug 'uppishness' and D.J. Enright praised as a 'champion of ordinary existence against the whimsies of the over-educated'.

Carey himself went up to Oxford in the mid-'50s and liked it so much that he's stayed on in that everyday world as a lecturer ever since. What was that he said about Huxley? 'There's something absurd about fulminating against mankind's "craving for pleasure" when you're staying at Claridges.'

But the supreme exponent of this kind of contradiction, as far as Carey is concerned, is Sartre, whose vaunted identification with the masses was apparently betrayed by his actual disdain for them. Another striking feature of *Original Copy*, ironically, is that apart from the abstracted majority of the hard-working, Carey doesn't come across that many people *he's* keen on either. Examples abound; here is one which shows him on particularly good form:

> Among the current clichés I especially deplore is the one which refers to hospital patients kept alive by machines as 'cabbages'. This is inaccurate and insulting to vegetables. For a cabbage is a sturdy, self-reliant being, and compared with an average specimen of twentieth-century manhood it has . . . a positively athletic air.

All this is very witty. You can enjoy it in the same way that you can enjoy the 'laconic rhetoric of denigration' (as Carey, with his knack for the self-administered bull's-eye, calls it) of Evelyn Waugh, the people's novelist. □

FICTION

The great fight

Richard Deveson

The Rape of the Rose
GLYN HUGHES *Chatto* £11.95

GLYN HUGHES is one of those novelists who inspire passionate applause among some parties and fastidious unease among others. This review is going to be one of those irritating Alliance-like exercises which say that both parties are right. Or perhaps the point is (ref. Labour Party) that to get what you applaud you have to pay with what makes you uneasy. Does Hughes have the defects of his very impressive qualities?

The Rape of the Rose is the second part of his trilogy (*The Hawthorn Goddess* was the first) set in the Pennines during the early industrial revolution. At its centre is Mor Greave, a Yorkshire handloom weaver, self-taught schoolmaster, reader of Tom Paine, and author (like a forerunner who really lived) of secret and seditious reflections entitled *The Beggar's Complaint*. The year is 1812, and Mor is running messages for 'King Ludd'. His wife and young son are working under conditions of near-slavery in Horsfall's Paradise Mills; the villages are full of troops, virtually an army of occupation; only on the moors, among the rocks and flowers and skylarks, is there a sense — however delusive — of freedom.

The opening chapters are masterfully done, establishing the family, the cottage, the mills and the moors, and stirring in the radicalism, religious ardour, conspiracy and rumour that were the enzymes which created the fermentation of Luddism. Mor, the absent-minded, reluctant activist, feeling his way out of superstition into humanism, is brilliantly drawn, as is his sickly, life-battered Southcottian wife Phoebe. And what Hughes summons up perhaps even better than his people is his people's physical world: their landscape, their scarce possessions. The value they have steeped into a chair or a table or a violin is reflected in sentences which themselves are shaped and polished like preindustrialised wood. At the same time, Hughes sees the poetry in the new steam engines, for all that they are enslaving the new workers, who aren't portrayed as noble innocents either.

Early unease is set off, for this reader, by some of the Blake-and-Lawrence imagery of singing and dancing, the symbolism of blood and roses. Poetry and action often don't cohabit easily, and so it proves here. The very power which makes the outward and inward scene-setting so striking seems to make the plot curdle when it should be thickening. There is a machine-breaking raid on Horsfall's mill, but the events are confusing and almost perfunctorily disposed of. Mor and his son separately take to flight, and for long stretches neither the story nor the historical colouring-in advances very far while the two of them wander the moors.

Or when something does happen, it can have a grotesque blood-and-roses unreality. After Mor meets up with Mary The Scar, whore and *agente provocateuse*, there are sequences of long and heavy bawdy through which we sit waiting vainly for Fellini or Ken Russell to shout 'Cut!'. Another raid (based on fact) ends in an orgy of destruction, and is much more convincing, though whether the military are likely to have let the riot rip as a stratagem for ambushing the ringleaders is hard to believe. In a final burst of implausibility, with Luddism about to be defeated, Mor allows himself to abandon his whole personality and be recruited into the ranks of repressive authority.

There is much more in the book: more excess, some historical hindsight, but also much more compassion and sense of outrage. The third novel, presumably, will finally unveil a unifying symbolic machinery of kinship and birthright, but it is the impassioned protest against the divisive rule of real machines for which this trilogy will be remembered. □

PAPERBACKS

Train sets and Exocets

Paul Hallam

THE JOYS OF SELLING are much in evidence in this crop of post-election paperbacks. Nicholas Faith relishes the auctioneer's cry in **Sold** (Coronet, £3.95), which is part a history of Sotheby's, part a flattering biography of its most successful director, Peter Wilson. The book's underlying assumption is that greed is only human. Wilson recognised and encouraged a widening greed, rather like Thatcher, and altered 'our visual perception, now covered with a film of monetary appreciation'. His 'genius', that is, was to put a price tag on everything: Raphaels to ration books, Titians to train sets.

Wilson's an interesting enough figure, but a couple of lines on, for example, this married man's homosexuality are hardly sufficient. It's foolhardy to tackle in a single book a biography, the shift towards valuing 'genius' more than precious art materials, the move to investment in the 'speculative growth stock' of modern artists, *and* our strange, complex mania for collecting. Faith flits about, ever anxious for an amusing anecdote and ends up selling the reader short.

The Ford heirs bought paintings. Henry Ford himself, as Faith relates, was so impressed by the illustrated catalogue presented to him by greedy dealers he saw no need to buy the originals! That same flattering story appears in Robert Lacey's

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Ford (Pan, £4.95). I feared the worst with Lacey's introductory remarks — 'He had a vision, Henry Ford. He wanted it all.' But this turns out to be a warts and worse biography. He demolishes myths Ford encouraged about himself and presents a complex picture of a man admired by both John Reed and Hitler (honorary mention as 'a great man' in *Mein Kampf*, whose author would have appreciated his anti-Semitism).

The Ford English School devised pageants for its immigrant employees, where graduates disembarked from a mock-up steamship dressed in native costume, then emerged from the 'melting pot' (a giant cauldron) in US dress, waving the Stars and Stripes. Employees' families were liable to visits from Ford's 'Sociological Department' to make sure they upheld his clean-living temperance standards. Union leaders also got house-calls — from his Service Department, Mafia-connected thugs. Ford was also an active if naive campaigner for world peace, a fan of country dancing and a pioneer of the soya bean industry. He firmly believed in reincarnation.

Confessions of an Advertising Man by David Ogilvy (Pan, £3.95) is a newly-prefaced reissue of the 1963 million-seller. It's a how-to-succeed book, and a smug self-advertisement, like most such manuals. I imagine it was read more for reassurance than for tips, to encourage the reader to think s/he might still make it. It all sounds so simple: 'be human enough to be affectionate' to employees; always remember 'The consumer is not a moron. She is your wife. Don't insult her intelligence.' Hard work pays, be independent, be polite, make the ads memorable not avant-garde art, and allow time for creative 'telegrams from the unconscious'. Though Ogilvy says a 'ladder is open to everybody' he gave the copyright on the book to his son. 'Leg-ups help' is not amongst his maxims.

Frank Barnaby's **The Automated Battlefield** (Oxford, £4.95) assesses the result of war and armaments promotion to date, and offers scenarios for the future. It's a chilling guide to modern weaponry, the business now reckoned to occupy 20 per cent of the world's best scientists. Barnaby, co-chair of the World Disarmament Campaign, traces the development of 'fire and forget' or 'launch and leave' weapons, from the laser-guided 'smart bombs' tested in Vietnam to the infinitely smarter ones of the '80s. The move towards an automated battlefield is related to cost, frequently favouring defence. 'It is now much cheaper to destroy main battle tanks, long-range military aircraft, and large warships than to deploy them.' HMS *Sheffield*, built in 1972 at a cost of $50 million, was sunk by an air-launched $250,000 Exocet. The future lies with accurate, autonomous missiles, weapons no longer dropped or fired but guided. The role of ships, tanks, planes and even armies will increasingly become symbolic, a projection of power in peacetime. The book's overall conclusion is, however, tacked-on and contentious. NATO, argues Barnaby, should adopt a conventional non-provocative defensive deterrence on moral, military and economic grounds. Pacifists might not find the distinction between 'offensive' and 'defensive' either as clear or as morally acceptable.

Nigel Dudley's **This Poisoned Earth** (Piatkus, £3.95) is a well-argued campaigning guide to pesticide use, back-garden and global. In one chapter you're faced with your own complicity in the pesticide industry — would *you* accept a caterpillar-munched lettuce in your local supermarket? If not you're probably helping sales of dangerous pesticides from one of the multinationals. Dudley reminds us of their sales morality. After the Seveso explosion of 1976 the president of Hoffman La Roche declared: 'capitalism means progress, and progress can lead sometimes to some inconvenience'. After the Bhopal 'inconvenience' it seems Union Carbide might try to blame it on Sikh terrorists. This is a how-to-resist book, though whether it will work on a lazy shopper and eater like myself . . .

Sylvia Townsend Warner's sharp and beautifully written **Summer Will Show** (first pub. 1936, Virago, £4.95) presents a tough aristocrat burdened with the children she has spoilt — children embarrassed by a labourer's sweat, 'a hot man so close'. When her daughter is dying she sees only a 'snoring, choking slug'; the children are wounds 'that would never quite heal, that must perpetually be cleansed and dressed'. Wanting another chance, another child, she pursues her unfaithful husband to France. It's 1848. A transitional encounter with a French porter, 'like nibbling up a fresh young radish', is followed by a major one. She falls in love with Minna, a Lithuanian Jew, her husband's mistress. *Summer Will Show* is a brilliant account of the theatre of revolution, the subsequent messes and disappointments, shirking none of the muddled motives, hiding none of the blood. □

PHILOSOPHY

Relatively speaking

Martin Thom

Culture, Identity and Politics
ERNEST GELLNER *Cambridge* £25 & £8.95

WHEN A HISTORY of British 20th-century philosophy is written, Ernest Gellner is likely to be remembered first for *Words and Things* (1959), a highly polemical study of linguistic philosophy. Gellner's target was the work of the latter Wittgenstein and, by extension, of the many philosophers who had accepted his view that meaning, rather than truth, was the central aspect of philosophy, and that the distinction between what was meaningful and what was meaningless could only be established by attending to workaday use of words in the world.

The philosopher, thanks to Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*, had become a kind of grammarian of actual linguistic custom. One of those pilloried in *Words and Things* was to write in 1963 that 'The proper work of philosophy is purely descriptive, to set out the linguistic facts that reveal our habits of thought . . .'. Claims of this kind, insofar as they make the consensus of a given community self-authenticating and, indeed, logically prior to pure reason, condemn us to a relativism which, in Gellner's view, undermines itself.

What Oxford philosophy had clearly *not* done by 1959 was to draw out the full implications of Wittgenstein's emphasis upon use, upon the absolute embeddedness of language in 'forms of life'. A number of philosophers had seen that such a position required a theoretical alliance between philosophy and social anthropology but only Ernest Gellner, of the philosophers of his generation, actually became an anthropologist, completing a fieldwork study of communities in the Atlas Mountains of Morocco.

Gellner's *central* argument, as I understand it, has involved first exploring and then challenging the relativism intrinsic to Wittgenstein's position. An admission that there are indeed a large number of different kinds of social structure in the world, with widely divergent and, in fact, incommensurate belief systems, is therefore cancelled by the counter-assertion that the processes of modernisation — with all the 'disenchantment' they bring in their train — have led other cultures on a *forced* march into the maw of industrial revolution. Gellner therefore takes issue with relativism, where it denies those historical moments within Western European Culture (the Reformation, the Scientific Revolution, the Enlightenment) at which an individual recasting of thought has shattered communal consensus.

Crucially, Descartes' 'Cosmic Exile' is seen by Gellner as the turning-point in philosophy, one which made possible the cumulative properties of Western European science, and much is made of the contrast between the heroically unplaced individual of rationalist and empiricist philosophy and the nostalgia for all that is soothingly collective in nationalism, for instance — or, at another level, in the philosophy of Wittgenstein.

Three qualities of Gellner's prose raise difficulties for the reader: his dazzlingly recursive mode of reasoning, his taste for burlesque and his tendency to collapse individual philosophers into broader categories. The third of these qualities is perhaps the most disquieting, and yet the almost caricatural division of philosophers into positivists and Hegelians (a category which here includes Wittgenstein and his followers) is a necessary consequence of Gellner's view of the place of modern philosophy in history. *Culture, Identity and Politics* begins as follows: 'The nineteenth century was the age of nationalism. It was also the age in which the great secular ideologies emerged, and it was the period during which the social sciences came into being.' Gellner is thus here engaged in a study of the matrix which generated, in the period after the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, the values of the modern world. One way of characterising a project of this sort would be to say that it is half-anthropological and half-historical, that it subjects the gamut of pre-modern societies, whether Western European or otherwise, to the scrutiny of a mode of enquiry established, once and for all, by Descartes, and that, finally, it claims that, in all honesty, one cannot do otherwise.

The dilemma respecting relativism — which has also preoccupied another maverick philosopher, Alasdair MacIntyre — would seem in fact to have acquired, all of a sudden, a new urgency, as if 100 years after French sociology had begun its recasting of the problems raised by the dialectical relation between Enlightenment rationalism and

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German idealism, we were able to view both the original problem *and* the reformulation of it in a new light. Some readers will suspect that Gellner's critique of Wittgenstein verges on parody, and that a meditation upon what it is for something to 'have a point' within a 'language game' precludes the romantic depths attributed to his notion of a 'form of life'; others may sense that Gellner's historical approach to philosophy is at odds with his evident scepticism regarding philosophers who have championed historicist accounts of value. It is certainly the case that an unqualified trust in Cartesian method here implies a refusal of any Pascalian wagers, of dialectics and of a collective project of a totalising kind.

Gellner's individualist epistemology is planted squarely at the centre of his writings, a bare-knuckled, barefoot pugilist whose fists rain blows, in the name of a painful but necessary disenchantment, upon all the still enchanted social orders, be they the pre-modern societies studied by anthropologist or historian, or the regimes of Eastern Europe. This sceptical boxer is a child of the 1950s and lashes out a shade more savagely to left than to right; Gellner's account of the leading figures of Western marxism is therefore often close to caricature. In the post-Stalinist period, when the debate on socialism and moral values was of such central importance, some philosophers believed a reconstruction of a socialist project to be possible; others endorsed the liberal pluralism of what, after Popper, was seen as an 'open' rather than a 'closed' society.

This is, of course, to simplify but not to the point of travesty. But, however Gellner's political alignment is judged, the attentive reader will allow his contribution to the study of relativism to have been a lasting one, and the final essay in *Culture, Identity and Politics* a succinct, honest and open-ended reformulation of it. □

Only a handful of photographers have been popularly noted as the authors of the Farm Security Administration project, among them Dorothea Lange and Marion Post Wolcott. Women are by no means absent from the FSA record, but it's Lange's 'Migrant Mother' and other testimonies to female suffering and endurance in the Dustbowl that have claimed historical prominence. In LET US NOW PRAISE FAMOUS WOMEN: WOMEN PHOTOGRAPHERS FOR THE US GOVERNMENT 1935-44 (Pandora, £9.95) Andrea Fisher brings us the work of Lange, Woolcott, and six more women engaged in the FSA and its offspring, the Office of War Information. It shows how the move from rural poverty to war industry and urban life not only re-shaped perceptions of femininity, but made way for a documentary aesthetic stylistically at odds with that earlier realism. It's most evident in the pictures of Esther Bubley, whose dreamy, self-absorbed single women inhabit a transient boarding house and bar-room world rife with the moody ambiguities of Hollywood melodrama. If Fisher's choice of subjective engagement with the images and their history has led to some awkward excursions into academic excess, her archive trawl has still netted a marvellous catch. She is right to insist that here is something much more tantalising than the worthy rescue of invisible women. Above: Esther Bubley, 1943. (Liz Heron)

CRIME

Murder on the Orient

Nick Kimberley

THE DETECTIVE STORY, with its inbuilt search for truth and rightness, seems to have acquired the status of global myth. Is there any country which possesses a publishing industry but not a sleuth? Perhaps. But it's certainly no surprise to find a Japanese thriller whose form exactly matches its Western counterparts.

Seicho Matsumoto's **Points and Lines** (trans. Makiko Yamamoto and Paul C. Blum, Kodansha, dist. Harper & Row, £4.25) begins with bodies lying on a beach, apparently joined in 'love suicide': there's an immediate reminder of the beaches of English crime fiction, littered with such bodies, whose presence, as here, needs some explaining. Throughout the novel, Matsumoto seems well aware of fictional precedents from across the world.

In Japan, Matsumoto has won prizes for his fiction but little of his work has so far appeared in English, which makes this businesslike translation particularly welcome. But I wonder if the publisher has deliberately chosen a novel that fits Western concepts of what a mystery story should do: the plot is a familiar tangle of false leads, inspirational insights and tired coppers. The central enigma revolves round an almost metaphysical contemplation of train timetables — which for at least one character become a novel in themselves, bringing people together, drawing them apart, shifting the landscape and linking distant places. A British reader might find the fiction of railway timetables in their unreliability; *Points and Lines* relies on their absolute accuracy — 'The connections were as regular as links in a chain.' The novel as a whole is equally regular, finding a niche in Western crime fiction with few disruptive moments to set it apart. In a way, reading it becomes another mystery story as we inevitably follow our own search for clues — to Japan and the Japanese.

If Matsumoto's novel does little to unsettle our ideas of how crime fiction works, Masako Togawa's **The Lady Killer** (trans. Simon Grove, Penguin, £2.50) is altogether more jarring. The cover informs us that Togawa is 'The P. D. James of Japan', a comparison which does no favour to either; all that links them is their sex. *The Lady Killer* was published in Japan in 1963, but took over 20 years to find its way into English — the loss is ours.

The novel opens with a bar-room scene every bit as glitteringly seedy as the boozy dens of David Goodis. Predatory sexuality permeates the atmosphere as a lonely woman picks up a partner to the background of Western classical music, sung in Japanese. She's quickly punished for her

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forwardness — but so is the man she's taken to bed. He's a married womaniser who's pursued through the novel by a punishing echo of his own sexuality. A disturbing sequence of murders seems set to imprison him, both literally and metaphorically. The murderer's imaginative deployment of blood and semen incriminate him, suggesting that the two bodily fluids somehow conspire in his romantic conquests — which he himself describes as 'shooting'.

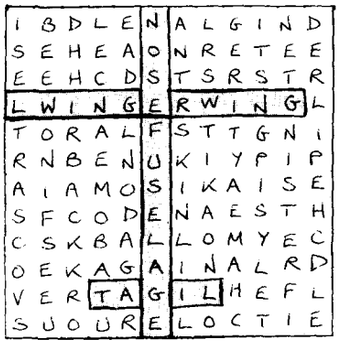
If the novel eventually embraces a familiar search for the true identity of the murderer, the sexual unease takes the story into areas Matsumoto seemed prepared to leave alone. There's a sophistication about Togawa's fusion of violence, sex and loneliness which more recent and specifically feminist thrillers have often found difficult to match.

It's impossible to read these two Japanese thrillers without making comparisons with more familiar fictions. Nor, as I've suggested, is it easy to avoid trying to read off from them a 'Japanese identity'; that's part of the pleasure, part of the danger of reading fiction in translation. By a converse mechanism, Western literature about Japan also provides clues to identity — but 'ours', not 'theirs'. Exotic locations serve several functions in thrillers; sometimes there's even a real attempt to *understand* them. That's certainly what James Melville attempts in his series of Inspector Otani novels, the latest of which is **Kimono for a Corpse** (Secker, £10.95). A rather cumbersome story of blackmail in the world of Japanese fashion is the hook on which Melville hangs his large affection for Japan and the Japanese; but whereas Matsumoto and Togawa, obviously, take Japan as 'read', Melville has to assume the details need explaining. This expansion turns his novels into a sort of travelogue, observant and pointed no doubt, but still relying on a sense of the Orient as Other. He at least has the wit to sense how the equation works in reverse — any country, he suggests, which has a football team named Accrington Stanley is not entirely without its own brand of exoticism.

Such subtleties are largely beyond the scope of John Marquand's series of Mr Moto novels, begun in 1936 with **Your Turn, Mr Moto**, followed by **Thank You, Mr Moto** in 1937, both now reprinted (Souvenir, £8.95). Marquand was a hyperproductive writer, with dozens of books to his credit, and these Mr Moto novels bear all the scars of pulpish rush: fast but often incidental action followed by becalmed longueurs; impasses solved by sudden skirmishes worthy of the lowliest film serial. There's a certain charm here which wears thin when stretched over 300 pages; it does nothing to conceal the way in which Marquand patronises his Orientals, whether the Japanese Mr Moto, or the teeming Chinese of *Thank You, Mr Moto*. His central figure here, Tom Nelson, slips into an easy relationship of master to all his Chinese servants, and, while claiming to understand the vast country he finds himself in, can't manage to find the smell of garlic anything other than nauseating. Intellectual imperialist, he has captured the Orient for his own ends.

That said, Marquand uses the Chinese as a means of undercutting Western certainties, of arriving at a new vision. This is the territory of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*; while riddled with xenophobia, the Moto novels find room to comment on America too. Tom Nelson's catchphrase, 'It doesn't matter, does it?' is intentionally the slogan of a bankrupt cynicism. □

Solution to Salamanca 122



Prizewinners to Salamanca 122

B. G. Midgley (Crowthorne, Berks.)
A. J. Shields (London W11)
Roy S. Johnson (Brunei)

PILLAGE

Come and get 'em

Jules Lubbock

The Elgin Marbles
CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS with essays by ROBERT BROWNING and GRAHAM BINNS *Chatto* £12.95

OF ALL the lost causes for which the liberal left and this journal have ever provided a home, the campaign to return the Elgin Marbles to Athens must seem the ultimate as well the most forlorn. The launch of this book at St James's Piccadilly was attended by two former editors and many present and former writers for the *New Statesman* including Christopher Hitchens himself, several eminent professors, some with and some without snowy white beards, and Eric Heffer MP — all of them burning with the injustice of the situation.

The book itself explains and argues their case with impeccable clarity and all the information one might desire. It is this: Lord Elgin, while British Ambassador to the Ottoman court after the Battle of the Nile, organised the removal, between 1801 and 1803, of many of the sculptured friezes and figures from the already severely damaged Parthenon, shipped them back to England and sold them to the British Museum in 1816 for £35,000 (about £1 million in today's money). The sculptures formed part of sequences and groups that possessed 'a unity of action and representation' and were intrinsic to the significance of this great national monument.

Today the sculptures are arbitrarily split, roughly half and half, between London and Athens, making it impossible for anyone to enjoy a unified impression of the whole, three-quarters of which survive. Commonsense alone calls for their reassembly either in London or in Athens; and Athens, where they could be housed in a museum next to the Parthenon, is the obviously appropriate place. They could not and should not be returned to the building itself because of the heavily polluted atmosphere of the city and the consequent condition of the building, already ruined by an explosion in 1687 and further damaged by Elgin's removal of the marbles themselves.

Putting aside the ethics of Elgin's actions, there seems a *prima facie* case on aesthetic and historical grounds for reuniting the sculptures in their original site. On the evidence of television polls and phone-in programmes the British public seems to accept this case. The present British government and the British Museum do not, and show no signs of being persuaded. Why?

Perhaps their strongest argument is that the return of the Elgin Marbles would open the floodgates for demands for the return of 'cultural property' of all kinds looted and pillaged from former colonial territories and elsewhere, which form an important part of the collections of the great western universal museums. On TV last year, the Director of the British Museum, Sir David Wilson, went so far as to compare the return of the Marbles to Hitler burning books; 'cultural fascism' as he called it. In fact this danger, if danger it is, is much exaggerated and crucial objects such as Benin bronze sculptures, the Hungarian royal crown and the Mandalay Regalia have already been returned by the BM and similar institutions without the predicted consequences.

So why does someone like Sir David, as cultivated, liberal and probably just as attached to lost causes as his opponents, prove so stubborn on this issue? As one of his severest critics I would like to suggest an answer based on my experience a year ago in successfully persuading the Association of Art Historians to pass a resolution supporting the principle of returning key items of cultural property to their homelands — it remains the only professional association in the field to have taken such action.

My original wording, based on a UNESCO resolution, had bluntly supported the principle of returning objects removed during conquest or colonial occupation *on the demand* of the country or people of origin. The Executive Committee, quite as liberal as Sir David if not more so, showed all the signs of the Dementia Elginosis from which he suffers. Nonetheless, imaginative redrafting on both sides achieved unanimous assent. Most important was the condition that *both* sides should *mutually* agree upon the central importance of the objects to a people's cultural heritage.

To some this may seem just a form of words, one moreover that weakens the case by giving the holding country the power of veto. But they possess that power already in the fact of possession. I believe that the wording strengthens the case as well as removing from the Sir Davids of this world, who are neither looters, nor closet imperialists, the implied blame for the vandalism of their predecessors. I begin to suspect that the British campaigners, in common with other liberals and leftists, do not actually wish to win, because to win would be to lose — to lose their 'lost cause' altogether. But, as in all diplomacy, of which cultural diplomacy is a part, the only test of real will is the readiness to enter into real *negotiations*. □

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Seeking solace in fictions

Yvonne Roberts, London SW4

John Lloyd, in 'The story of Mary and Monica' (*NS* 31 July), attempts to tell us why the Archer libel action was 'hugely important to us all' and he relates it to what he terms 'the crisis in the left's press'. Unfortunately, in doing so, he reveals himself to be the Barbara Cartland of the barricades: his thesis is strong on naivety, wonderfully romantic — it's just a pity about the plot. More seriously, in attempting to make his case, he also demonstrates how the attitudes he represents are themselves much of the cause of the 'crisis in the left's press'.

John Lloyd is enamoured of the *News of the World* and the *Sun*. His logic is simple. If they can get millions of readers, why doesn't the left adopt the same 'values' and, hey presto, we have success. The hurdle in his argument is feminism. Once feminists have their way, then all the 'fun' goes out of the product.

Post-feminist new men (whoever they may be), he says, have evacuated the popular press's domain in the face of the force of feminism, in favour of a 'quiet life'. Meanwhile, according to him, the *NoW* and the *Sun* are 'fully engaged' in this 'great struggle over the status of the family, the possibility of romantic love, over how far promiscuous sexuality can co-exist with social stability'. To sink to the vocabulary of the tabloid press of which Mr Lloyd is so fond — what a lot of cock.

Feminism is important not just because of its inherent belief in the value and position of women but because of the stand it takes against the anti-humanist trait which sears its way across the *Sun* and the *NoW* — an anti-humanism which is as punishing on men as it is on women. The struggle over the *News on Sunday*'s slogan, 'No tits but a lot of balls', wasn't 'a farce', it was an indication of how the paper was going to treat people in general.

Last Sunday, the *News of the World*'s 'great struggle' to assert the status of the family boiled down to the usual hotch-potch of prejudice, greed, violence and a brutalising kind of sexuality, the underlying theme of which is that women are owned by men and the Good Woman (of whom John Lloyd is so incredulous) will kick you in the balls sooner or later. Witness these headlines: 'Di Ducked Love Night With Charles'; 'Linley's girl hurt in mystery fall'; 'Cheating lover cost me world fight'; 'Bananarama bride's bed-hopping trail' . . . Are these 'the complexities' which John Lloyd admires?

John Lloyd argues that in the Archer case, the *NoW* was cast (didn't it cast itself?) in the role of 'the radical', 'a role which it plays increasingly well'. The only radical element in the paper is its frequent radical departure from the truth: see this week's apology to Sam Fox. The *NoW*'s use of Monica, 'a burlesque', far from being 'unleashed . . . brilliantly' was the deployment of the same tired old formula: the hooker with a heart of gold. Monica Coghlan's own evidence gave her back some dignity.

Who needs to search outside for paternalism when it can be found so easily within the *NS*? It never seems to occur to John Lloyd that far from being 'produced' Mary Archer may have decided for herself to publicly stand by her man.

The Archer trial *was* hugely important, but not for the reasons Lloyd implies. Yet again it revealed how dangerously out of touch our judges are with life as we, the public, live it. Mr Justice Caulfield's ludicrous summing up with its shades of chivalric love, the *Roman de la Rose*, and his ill-informed ideas on male sexuality should have triggered a strong piece in the *NS* on the judiciary.

The crisis in the left's press does need some 'rethinking'. Among its problems is this strange love affair with the non-journalism of Murdoch's rags; its lack of finance and its preoccupation with the (unworkable) editorial collective (witness the *News on Sunday*).

Most important of all, the crisis is due to a real lack of individuals on the left who have the flair, humour, boldness of design, true radicalism, experience and understanding of what interests, angers and entertains a mass audience. And a mass audience *does* exist for a populist caring tabloid. This lack is not the fault of feminism — it is cowardice to suggest it is — it is the failure of those whom, like John Lloyd, seek solace in fictions because the truth may hurt too much.

Plea for *New Socialist*

Lewis Minkin, Chair, New Socialist *Editorial Advisory Panel*

Those of your readers who have read the contributions of Conrad Jameson, James Curran and Stuart Weir to the debate on the future of *New Socialist* will now be partially aware of why it is that those of us fighting to safeguard the future of the journal have such difficulty in persuading the NEC.

Readers will have learned that the NEC was 'bounced' into going monthly with figures which were massaged to persuade them. They will have learned that the sales slumped dramatically. What your readers also need to know, and the NEC needs to know, is that the Editorial Advistory Panel knew *nothing* about the first until Stuart Weir announced it to the EAP years later. As for the drop in sales we were ill-informed about this also, although we repeatedly requested information because we were convinced from our constituency experience that the journal was suffering a major decline.

What the figures also now show is that *New Socialist* went through a major crisis with a drop of 70 per cent in party sales as members simply stopped selling and buying it. Hence the financial crisis.

In these circumstances *New Socialist* has confirmed many of the prejudices of some members of the NEC about 'intellectuals' — that *New Socialist* has been run by people who are irresponsible, untrustworthy, and whose judgment on relevance is inherently suspect. It is not helpful to portray such attitudes as part of a right-wing plot. The NEC has something to complain about.

I remain convinced that a majority of members of the NEC do not share the illiberal position suggested by James Curran's article. There is considerable appreciation of the need for the party to produce a journal which can explore in some depth the problems facing the labour movement, and vigorously debate on the future of the party and its socialism.

The General Secretary and the NEC face considerable financial problems — that the EAP appreciates. We know that the journal cannot remain as a monthly given the scale of its losses. We also understand that the NEC wants to be reassured that it is not again being financially misled. We have accepted that the party will need to establish some parameters to the political operation of *New Socialist* to ensure that it does not lurch off in a direction which damages the party and undermines the credibility of the whole enterprise. We think that the bi-monthly proposal which is at present under discussion meets the needs of the party.

If your readers wish to help in persuading the NEC they could write to the General Secretary to urge that *New Socialist* be given the opportunity to prove itself again. It took 80 years to establish. It would be a tragedy if it were allowed to die.

Public inquiry?

David Leigh, Associate Editor, Observer, *London EC4*

I was surprised to read the letter from Sir Peter Blaker (*NS* 31 July) which denied that MI5 information had been supplied to Conservative propagandists for potential use against CND. This is a grave matter. I made some inquiries about it for an *Observer* article earlier this year, and spoke to both Blaker and the Conservative propagandist Julian Lewis.

My notes do not show that either of them then made the claim that — if I understand Blaker's rather complicated explanation alright — open material on CND was gathered by Lewis in 1983; passed on by him for some reason to DS19, (a government department); passed back by DS19 to Blaker; and then circulated by Blaker as a propaganda exercise while Blaker simultaneously 'viewed' some MI5 material on CND that DS19 had also collected at the behest of Conservative ministers, but did not make propaganda use of it.

The story seems to have changed. Lewis told me at the time that any material he had was passed direct to Blaker, his party colleague — which seems more logical, I must say. Blaker did not dispute my statement that he had also been personally passed material from DS19, then headed by civil servant John Ledlie. No one in Whitehall, nor Blaker himself, suggested to me the present version.

I don't know where the truth of this lies. But to any objective observer, these increasingly complicated and apparently inconsistent explanations by the Conservative Party must be worrying. I am also worried as to how a Minister can be comfortable with a situation where he is simultaneously 'entitled to view' MI5 material ordered up by politicians, and also presides over a committee making election propaganda. Would Blaker consent to a public inquiry into just what did occur?

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Realignment and reality

Media attention since the general election has been focused on internal conflicts *within* the Alliance and the Labour Party. Far more important for the country's future is the relationship *between* the two.

A week after the 1983 election I suggested in a newspaper article that, unless the opposition parties concluded an electoral arrangement to prevent them depriving each other of victory, *the same thing would happen again next time.*

The idea got short shrift from the leaders of all three parties. It was widely regarded as a form of treason. I was bitterly attacked by an SDP colleague in the columns of the *Guardian*.

That forecast has been borne out nonetheless. The election result in 1987 was not significantly different from that of 1983. The Conservative share of the vote was almost identical, the Labour Party rose 3 per cent from its disastrous 1983 position, while the Alliance share correspondingly fell.

There is absolutely no reason to expect that, in four years' time, *the result will be significantly* different. There is no foreseeable political development likely to alter that prospect. Yes, there will probably be a merger between the Liberals and the SDP and the election of a single leader. Yes, there may be a bitter struggle for power within the Labour Party, with a variety of possible outcomes. But neither is likely to alter the damaging effect of a divided opposition edging each other out in an electoral system designed for two parties.

If things go remarkably well for the Alliance, it might climb to 30 per cent of the vote; but this would almost certainly be won at the expense of the Labour Party, not of the Conservatives. If things go remarkably well for Labour, its share in the opinion polls might at some stage exceed 40 per cent; but it is most unlikely to stay there by the time the next election, carefully stage-managed as on the two previous occasions, takes place. Any reasonable person, if asked to place a bet on the outcome of the next election, would forecast yet another Conservative victory: a victory brought about by the determination of the opposition parties to prevent themselves from winning by refusing even to contemplate *the one development which might prevent that* outcome occurring.

An electoral arrangement does not require a political truce between the parties involved. It need not prevent vigorous, even bitter, conflict between them on policies and issues. It requires only that in a limited number of seats — 50 seats, mainly in the North, where the Alliance has no chance of winning but effectively prevents a Labour victory, and 50 seats, mainly in the south where the Labour Party has no chance of winning but denies victory to the Alliance — the party in third place would agree to stand down. No great political sacrifice is involved for either party, since both would know perfectly well that they have no chance of victory themselves in these seats. It is an arrangement in the manifest interest of both parties, if their desire is actually to achieve power rather than to languish permanently in opposition.

It is a course prevented only by stubborn pride and wishful thinking. Pride dictates that it is a shameful humiliation to agree to consider any kind of concession to any other political party. Wishful thinking dictates that, if only the party stands firm and contests every seat in the country, its position will have been sufficiently strengthened by the time the next election comes to enable it to win single-handed.

When an election is still far away political leaders find it easy to buoy themselves up with political dreams of this kind. To consider any alternative outcome is regarded as a form of heresy. But in fact it is only in the early stages, when an election is still distant, that such an arrangement is feasible at all. Once candidates have begun to be selected, which will begin a year or so from now, no party is going to ask them to stand down in the interests of an arrangement which will anyway be politically controversial with the rank and file of both parties.

Hard-liners on both sides will find plentiful reasons for denouncing proposals of this kind. They will insist that it is neither necessary nor desirable. But if members of the Labour Party believe that a fall of 3 per cent in the Alliance share of the vote has condemned the latter to permanent oblivion, I forecast that they need only wait until the first by-election to learn how mistaken they are. If members of the Alliance delude themselves that the new infusion of left-wing strength in the Parliamentary Labour Party contains the seeds of its destruction, I suggest that they should recall how easily Neil Kinnnock increased his standing, both within the nation and within his party, by standing up to the left two years ago: a feat he will relish having the opportunity to repeat, with a similar outcome, whenever it may become necessary.

No doubt this proposal will be greeted with as much disdain this time as it was exactly four years ago. Probably, therefore, in four years' time, we will once again be mourning the re-election of yet another Conservative government: with a similar majority of seats, based on a similar minority of votes, under a leader who, after all, has amply warned us that she wants nothing better but to go on and on and on.

Evan Luard

Evan Luard is a member of the SDP and former Labour MP for Oxford.

The Lib-Lab Divide

There is a growing clamour on the left of British politics for some kind of deal to be done between the Labour Party and the Liberals. The aims of this are laudable enough — the defeat of Thatcherism and the ditching of right-wing elements in the SDP. But since most advocates of a Lib-Lab deal have so far come from the Labour Party, they have failed to take account of a number of obstacles to co-operation between the two parties which are obvious, perhaps, only to Liberals.

The Liberal Party is fundamentally committed to the democratic process as an end in itself, not simply as a means of achieving something else. For Liberals democracy is the beginning and the end of political activity. The only thing more important than democracy is the right of citizens to participate in democracy.

In contrast, it seems to Liberals that the Labour Party (and this often includes the 'soft' left as well as the 'hard' variety) typically sees democracy in instrumental terms. It is good only to the extent that it delivers, or promises to deliver, 'socialism', itself defined not in terms of democratic participation, but in terms of economic equality or, less fashionably, state *control of the economy.*

Thus the only difference we can see between the revolutionary leftist sectarians, who completely reject democracy ('in its present form' they would say, but the consequences of this view are obvious), and Labour is that the latter are more optimistic about the chances of bringing about 'socialism' within the existing system. Like the German Social Democrats before the First World War, Labour has become a party of revolutionary waiting. Its activists talk the language of class war, while its leaders talk of pragmatism and patience.

But from the Liberal point of view it is just as offensive to support democracy for such weak reasons as it is to repudiate it utterly. Being a Liberal means being committed to democracy not grudgingly but enthusiastically, and regardless of the result, for Liberalism is as much about giving power away as about gaining it. Neil Kinnock's apparent obsession with power, therefore, makes him highly suspect. Our instincts are that those who are hungry for power are unlikely to want to spread it around.

The standard Labour reply is to claim that democracy is 'meaningless' without economic security. *Tell that to the blacks in South Africa* or to the people of the Philippines or of South Korea.

A similar obstacle to a Lib-Lab rapprochement arises from the Liberal view of citizenship, and especially the duties of fellow citizens. Citizenship, in the Liberal view, is a special though limited form of friendship, and it brings with it duties similar to those of ordinary friendship. The most important of these duties are not to lie, and not to manipulate.

But it was the absence of this respect for their fellow citizens that allowed the leaders of the Labour Party to run such a dishonest election campaign. The electorate was deliberately manipulated by slick advertising executives who accepted that if the Tories can fool people into voting for them, then Labour is justified in doing the same, for example by declaring a content-free zone around Neil Kinnock and hoping that no one noticed the taxation policies.

Another related problem, and one which comes up time and again in Liberal, and SDP, conversations about the Labour Party, is the question of the place of physical violence in Labour politics. When Ken Livingstone recently opposed the principle of one-member-one-vote selection of Labour parliamentary candidates on the ground that it would lead to the physical intimidation of Labour Party members, I suspect that Liberals from inner-city areas were much less surprised than, for example, the 'socialist' media-ocracy of Crouch End and Stoke Newington.

We also have to call into question the

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standard ideology of the trade unions in relation to industrial conflict. Is mass picketing really justifiable? Is it really right to intimidate and threaten scabs and blacklegs?

More fundamental still, but clearly related, is the impression Labour gives that there is nothing wrong with exploiting the irrational element in politics. Many Liberals were not at all impressed by the 'passion' of Labour's campaign. The calls to traditional loyalties, to emotions of anger and envy and, most effectively, of guilt all too often eclipse rational argument and debate.

Labour supporters may not have been able to hear the authoritarian, even fascist, undertones of the electoral campaign their party has just completed, but many Liberals were appalled at its naked appeals to prejudice and above all its elevation and promotion of a single 'strong leader'.

Ken Livingstone was not specific about whether the violence against individual members comes mainly from the left or from the right of the Labour Party. I am prepared to believe that both wings equally indulge in it. But this brings me to Liberal objections specifically to the Labour right.

The right contains a number of unreconstructed anti-marketeers, centralising corporatists and supporters of trade union bossism. How could Liberals vote for such people? Indeed, how could anyone, Liberal or not, stand working with them?

Labour people in return often ask Liberals how we can possibly put up with the Social Democrats. By now the answer should be obvious. For all the differences in policy on this matter or that, the SDP's commitment to democracy and civil liberties is unquestionable, and over the years, may of them have become increasingly Liberal in their attitudes to these central questions. And, of course, never, ever have I felt physically threatened by the SDP!

Politics calls for compromise and for working with people whose views do not exactly coincide with one's own. This is especially true of Liberal politics. The proportion of the population which is Liberal (or even liberal) in outlook is often small. The question is which people to work with. In the end I have to ask myself, to take the worst in both the Labour Party and the SDP, whether I would prefer working with the Militant tendency or working with David Owen. I have to say that, for all his faults, I would choose David Owen every time.

And, if Owen takes the advice of right-wing journalists such as Simon Jenkins and sets up a new centre right party, a kind of Reg Prentice memorial party, with the intention of playing Joe Chamberlain to some new Tory Salisbury, he will have disappeared from the problem, and the SDP will be even more acceptable to Liberals than it is now. If only the Labour Party's anti-democratic and reactionary elements would likewise depart! But of course, they never will. Their entire strategy is to hang on inside the Labour Party, by deception if necessary, and wait for it to come to power.

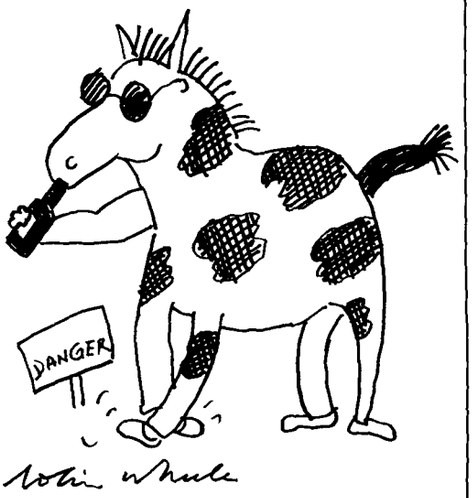
David Howarth

David Howarth is an Alliance City Councillor in Cambridge.

In defence of unilateralism

As a life-long supporter of a non-nuclear defence policy I was appalled at the performance of the Labour Party's leaders on this issue throughout the general election. It is arguable that more planning went into the famous 'Kinnock' broadcast than into the whole question of unilaterialism's media presentation.

Neil Kinnock's gaffe on the Frost show evoked visions of a blind clog dancer dead drunk in a minefield, while John Smith's performance on *Election Call* would have disgraced the rear end of a pantomime horse.



Apart from the fool, what were they playing at? Did they think that they could steal the show without a single rehearsal? Perhaps they thought that the Tories would fight the nuclear policy war to codes of chivalry obsolete even in Camelot.

Given that the Tory campaign was largely conducted by a man who thinks the Marquis of Queensbury rules is a piece of graffiti, any expectation that the Tories would fight a clean fight must rank as the most colossal example of naïveté since Chamberlain's dirty weekend in Munich.

Take John Smith's grotesque response when posed a question by a completely bogus (i.e. unchivalrous), army corporal. The questioner wanted to know what Britain's riposte would be if the Russians, faced with the possibility of conventional defeat by NATO forces, unleashed battlefield nuclear weapons. Smith's reply, roughly translated, went something like, 'Well, we'd have to suck it and see.' Thus he spurned a golden opportunity to hoist the phoney corporal with his own petard. If NATO commanders even dreamed that they could roll the Russians back then there would be no logical reason for the possession of battlefield nuclear weapons in the first place.

There can be no long-term gains made from trying to conduct the most profound debate in human history at the level set by the nuclear neanderthals. Take, for instance, the deadly one-liner that has been thrown out by everyone from Grimond to Healey. *Would America have bombed Japan if Japan had possessed the Bomb?*

This is a vampire question, because it sucks the life-blood from the debate and perpetuates its own existence. Yet I have seen intelligent and sincere men and women try to give an equally snappy one line answer to this show-stopper of a question. It cannot be done without appearing implausible or evasive. The question is not designed to elicit truth but to execute it. There is a valid answer but it requires thought on the part of the listener, and courage on the part of the questioner to raise the level of debate out of the gutter. It goes something like this.

According to Banesh Hoffman's biography of Einstein, the fall of France so alarmed the physicist that he and five leading scientists approached President Roosevelt to alert him to the possibility of a Nazi drive to nuclear capability. They then persuaded him of the pressing need for America to develop a nuclear weapon in order to preserve the western democracies. Roosevelt, *in the absolute belief that the Germans were forging a nuclear weapon*, then authorised the Manhattan project.

Now, if we re-formulate the question in terms of an equation *would A have attacked B if B had possessed the Bomb?* and then substitute America for A and Germany for B then the answer must be yes, because Roosevelt was prepared to take the chance on Germany having the Bomb.

The myth of deterrence is constantly deployed to bamboozle people, because if you agree with the principle then you must, perforce, be prepared to pay the price.

It is the self-imposed task of all unilateralists to explain and defend our cause, but we must be prepared to do so deploying ideas and language that might place stress on ourselves and our audience. It is, however, the moral duty of politicians to state their true convictions and then think through, incessantly, their adopted stance. This way we will be spared the sight of half-hearted disarmers trying to stave off the zealous acolytes of Moloch and mega-death. We may also be spared the carnage of a global Chernobyl. There is no time for stage fright now, let's just get our act together. It could be the last.

John Duff

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ROYAL SHAKESPEARE COMPANY 01-638 8891. Eves. 7.30 p.m., Mats. Thurs & Sat 2 p.m. **BARBICAN THEATRE:** 7 & 8 Aug. **THE BALCONY** by Genet. 13-20 Aug. **A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM** red. price prevs. (18 Aug. 7 p.m.) **THE PIT:** 7 & 8 Aug. **THE STORM** by Ostrovsky. 13-20 Aug. **THE ART OF SUCCESS** by Nick Dear (19 Aug. 7 p.m.) **THE MERMAID:** 01-236 5568/741 9999 (inc. Suns.). 7 & 8 Aug. **THEY SHOOT HORSES, DON'T THEY?** by Ray Herman and Horace McCoy. 13-20 Aug. **THE GREAT WHITE HOPE** by Howard Sacker (20 Aug. 7 p.m.)

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FEMALE (32), professional but warm, unattached, Norwich-based, enjoys travel, music, walking, skiing, theatre, old-fashioned roses but not politics, wishes to share small walled-garden and colourful, eclectic home with one sensitive male. How about starting with a brinjal bhaji at the Bombay (Norwich). Box (31)5310. W31.9

FORTIES FEMALE, S. Yorks, would like male companion to share time, ideas, feelings in almost totally reconstructed life after divorce. Guardian/NS interests, enjoys walking. Box (32)5322. W32.12

INDEPENDENT, PERSONABLE, professional Northern woman seeks non-smoking reliable and affectionate male companion, 45-55, for occasional meetings: status not necessarily relevant. Box (31)5308. W31.10

INDIAN MALE Postgraduate Lecturer, 50ish, teeto, veggy, N/S, divorced, loves humour, children. Wishes to correspond with unattached professional females, 40-50. Box 139 Jalingo Yola, Nigeria. W31.11

IS THERE a sincere, interesting, successful gent., possibly of Ukrainian/East European origin/American, for a lively, charming, intelligent female (30s), seeking caring relationship. Box (32)5335. W32.13

LINGUIST/HISTORIAN (London, mid-fifties, marooned), keenly interested in modern history (China, Middle East, socialism) seeks sensitive, educated female friend, with not too dissimilar interests. Box (32)5336. W32.14

PROFESSIONAL WOMAN, 50ish, (new breed; youthful, attractive, intelligent) seeks male companion with comparable qualities, to enjoy intellectual interests, countryside and a little dining and dancing. Manchester or region. Box (31)5309. W31.15

RADIO 4 LISTENER, with NS interests, attractive, 50-ish woman, University graduate, hopes to find educated man, 45-60, to share travel, films, theatre etc., sense of humour. Box (28)5221. W28.14

RESPONSIBLE FEMALE graduate, interested in single parenting, seeks genuine male for friendship. Box (32)5328. W32.15

VERY FEMININE, attractive lady (mid-forties). Loves Victorian lace, wild flowers, countryside, mountains, cultural pursuits, travel, boating, sports, socialising, books, homelife, gardening. Seeks companionship and closeness of loving, caring man. Box (31)5292. W31.17

WELL-TRAVELLED SCIENTIST, 30, easy-going, sincere, seeks broad-minded and intelligent woman for companionship. Cambridge and London. Box (32)5329. W32.17

WOMAN, under 35, undermanned and overdue for a relationship, seeks outgoing, non-macho man. East Midlands area. Box (31)5294. W31.18

WOMAN, 48, slim, divorced, with interesting job, good friends, usual cultural interests, loves walking, but finds emotional area of life empty — and hopes to meet similar man, in Sheffield area. Box (31)5274. W31.19

YORKSHIRE: married man, 41, finally realising life is not a rehearsal, wishes to meet married lady to push life to its limits. Box (32)5323. W32.16

AGENDA

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COURSES

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BACKCHAT

OUT TO LUNCH

Worth a candle

Andrew Lumsden

YOU MAY congratulate me — thankyou very much, thankyou very much — on successfully completing another birthday on 5 August.

> 'Where do you come from, you filthy queer?'
> 'From Vienna, Herr Hauptscharführer.'
> 'And where's that dump, then?'
> 'In Austria, Herr Hauptscharführer.'
> 'What's that, you swine? Austria? It's called Ostmark . . . You're not only a queer, you're a communist as well', he screamed, cursing me and beating me until I collapsed . . . I was sentenced to three days in the bunker . . . While I was there, a prisoner with a pink triangle, from Innsbruck in Austria, was tortured to death in the bunker. He was stripped naked and his hands tied to a hook in the wall . . .

Flossenbürg concentration camp, Bavaria, in the same weeks of 1941 when your faithful correspondent was getting himself born in Surrey, England. The speaker, 24 years old at that moment in Flossenbürg, spent 1939-45 in jail and concentration camps for having had a love-affair with a German boy of his own age when both were students.

His story is published as *The Men with the Pink Triangle* (GMP, reviewed in the *NS* 22 May). He didn't tell his tale till 1971. For it wasn't until 24 years after the immolation of Hitler in his *own* bunker that West Germany grew civil enough to honour a 1929 Reichstag resolution that male homosexual acts should cease to be a criminal offence.

East Germany honoured the 1929 resolution in 1968, West Germany in 1969. Neither was civil enough to offer the handful of pink-triangle survivors the financial compensation granted to the principal numerical sufferers of Nazism, the Jewish people. The memorials remain silent about what happened to people like me in Europe — and was still happening as I reached the first consciousness of which I have any memories.

I am obliged to Britain for having opposed the Third Reich — my thanks to that generation. However. The law of the realm this 5 August, as friends kindly celebrated my wartime birth day by paying their own bills in a restaurant of my choice, was and is: that the boy whom Hitler sent through Sachsenhausen and Flossenbürg concentration camps would today be as liable to jail in the UK for a 'gay act' below the age of 21 as he was in Austria in 1936, when at 19 he came out to his mother and some fellow students as gay.

Quietly and in my own mind on 5 August, for it is hardly a thing with which to demoralise a party, I lit an invisible candle to the anonymous interlocutor of *The Men with the Pink Triangle* (he couldn't bear for his name to be published, even in 1971). And to that martyr of Innsbruck, a mere lad as the *Pink Triangle* tells us, whose slow destruction in a bunker, more horrible than I'm prepared to repeat here, might have been mine with the slightest shift of dates and geography.

Two Mondays back, on 27 July, Ken Livingstone strode forward at Methodist Central Hall, Westminster, to the distant sound of someone practising the organ, to commemorate the 20th birthday, to the day, of Britain's 1967 Sexual Offences Act, which maintained a prohibition on gay male physical affection below the age of 21. Ken was in that brown suit again (he'll never get on in that colour. I keep telling him in print. He keeps ignoring me). He was lending countenance to republication of the GLC's *Changing the World* round-up of the fantastic opprobrium in which this country's laws and judicial precedents still hold homosexuals.

The day before, in Manchester, some 50 women and men launched OLGA (Organisation for Lesbian & Gay Action) whose targets include revising the law. It was others who did the work on that GLC document but as it happens I gave it its title. And I mean it. Germany totally proscribed male homosexuals in 1871, Britain (in fact by utterly negligent parliamentary draftsmanship) in 1885. But it wasn't Germany, it was Britain which exported homophobia so widely that even Israel's present total criminalisation of gays was inherited from 'our' Mandate. New Zealand shook off the evil inheritance only last year.

I want for some future birthdays an apology: a total governmental British statement of contrition. Even the Vatican has said sorry to the Chosen People. □

FIRST PERSON

Beyond the city limits

Nigel Fountain

I'M OUT OF IT most of the time on my bicycle. Two feet are pedestrian, cars are insulated, but bicycles move at dream-speed. And the city — London — on it is a map of my obsessions, hopes, pains, fears. It provides the personal history I have lived, others I wish to visit. In home territory, north by north-east, the imprint of memory is sometimes worn by endless repeated trips, but it still provides the odd jagged edge, the argument here, the meeting there, nightmares.

I usually have to go further for the recreation of other pasts, real and mythical, and the shape of our state. There are the obvious places; the East End around Brick Lane is the children of the Jago — or the Nichol as it really was in 1900 — the anarchists, Dickens and Defoe. The squalor of the 1980s makes the voyage back all too easy. In Notting Hill, drifting between the wide shabby houses that still survive the gentrification, the ghosts of Christie and Evans remain, overlaid by motifs of the 1960s' underground.

Other places' pasts are more elusive. Covent Garden's is lost in cutesy renovation. Almost the same is true of Chelsea, yet a ride along the river, with due attention to juggernauts, and an approach through Cheyne Walk yields the Edwardian borough; a place where the young Arthur Ransome sipped a disgusting sounding drink at Bohemian evenings in 1902 — 'Opal Hush' allegedly invented by W.B. Yeats comprised lemonade and claret. Artists' studios survive and artists don't. Yet, on sunny afternoons, cycling between the Jaguars and BMWs, that place returns, or it does until the Kings Road intrudes.

Long rides can go nowhere. The Lea Valley towpath to Enfield is boring, and head straight north from Finsbury Park along Green Lanes and job centres and kebab parlours float by. There, a century ago, market gardens fed the crooks, the artists and artisans of the old inner city. Now the gardens have retreated into Wormley and Broxbourne, football and rock star territory along the road to Cambridge.

Heading east can be equally tedious. Out through Leyton lie the 1930s of Orwell's *Coming Up For Air*. Decrepit light-engineering works shoved aside by DIY stores, cinemas-cum-bingo halls awaiting transformation into neat little earners for software-oriented redevelopers.

So I decided to leapfrog the periphery. With scant enthusiasm British Rail officials accepted my bicycle in their guards' vans, or, failing that, allowed me to stick it in the middle of passenger carriages.

One day last April, desperate to avoid work and

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a brief phase of spring city heat, I pedalled from Euston to Kings Cross to Waterloo to Victoria searching for escape. I even consulted a BR computer video of destinations: Arbroath, Anglesey and Wolverhampton seemed too ambitious.

At Victoria I gave up, and went to Faversham. It is an unprepossessing place, the stuff of which the bedrock of a 100-seat Conservative majority is made. But within ten minutes the town was gone, there were fields, even if largely covered in oil-seed rape. I ransacked my memory for the echo as I bumped across rutted tracks, along ditches towards the apple orchards. Then it came, a curious Michael Powell movie — *A Canterbury Tale*? — one of those semi-radical wartime eulogies to the virtues of England with a bizarre plot stitched together by doubtlessly desperate scriptwriters culminating at Canterbury Cathedral.

Skirting a sewage farm I headed for the hills. By the time I stopped for an apple (imported) at a village shop the resonance was louder. Off the Bovis estates, away from the supermarkets, people still spoke with what I guess — unless they were left over from the film — were Kentish accents. They advised me to make for the Thanet Way. I sped on through the back lanes until eventually forced on to the main road.

Then I breasted the hill in Canterbury. It was never like this by car or train, the city spread out below, the Cathedral in the late afternoon sunlight. I flew down the slope into the spiritual home of our rulers' domain. In the church Oxbridge Anglicans were celebrating Evensong, and a flood of sunlight poured through the great window; apotheosis. Sitting on the train, looking at green, misty fields I reflected that April was the apposite month . . .

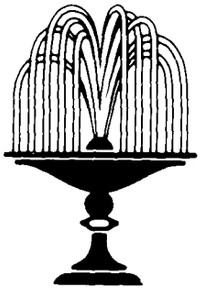
The old — and new — order reappared on a subsequent trip. A train to Southend and a bicycle beyond on a grey day would, I hoped, yield up more than the suburbs and industrial detritus spewing out of east London into Essex. Beyond the resort, the map indicated, lay Foulness. Naively my companion and I cycled along the promenade overlooking the Thames Estuary.

Past North Shoebury the signs appeared. Foulness is an army firing range, with a narrow path skirting the fringe leading to the shore. Beyond the 1980s' steel fencing lay 1940s' pill boxes. On the beach, huddled under a cracked concrete emplacement three anoracked birdwatchers viewed a lone duck far out to sea. Above their heads was the Keep Out notice. It was in good condition, but the name enforcing the order was that of Duff Cooper, last seen at the War Office some time in the late 1930s, long gone, but still symbolising the state's will on the present.

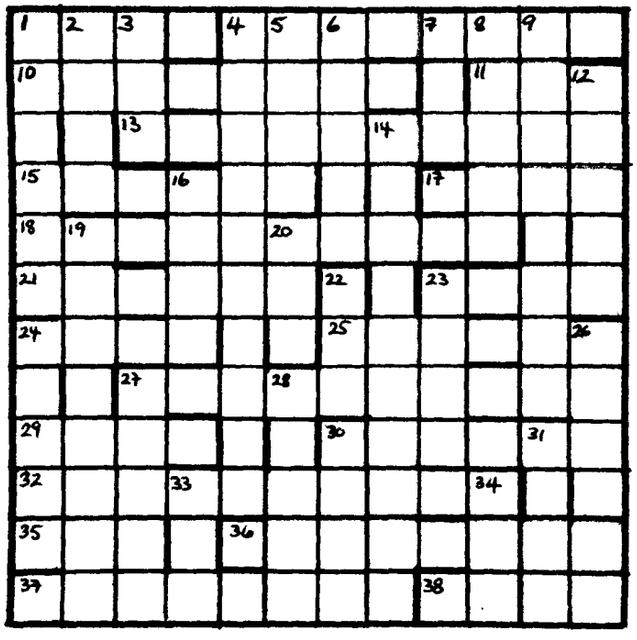
It started raining. I edged along the path and down to the water, by the fence. How ludicrous I thought, how anachronistic, at the end of the Estuary, over the Thames from the cathedral city,

Salamanca 123

'Quo Vadis?'



PRIZES: Copies of the *Collins Gem Crossword Dictionary* for the first ten correct solutions opened.* Entries to Salamanca 123, New Statesman, Foundation House, Perseverance Works, 38 Kingsland Road, London E2 8DQ, by first post 28 August.



Each clue leads to an answer which belongs in another numbered location of the same length in whose clue a definition or hint to it occurs. The unclued squares (*with two others*) in order provide a relevant seven-word quotation.

Solution and prizewinners to S122 appear on p30.

Name_____

Address_____

_____

**During the month of August '87, Collins Publishers will be sponsoring* New Statesman *crossword prizes and the first 10 correct entries for each puzzle will receive a copy of the* Collins Gem Crossword Dictionary.

Collins sponsors the annual Times Crossword Championship, the National Finals of which are on Sunday, 6 September, at the Park Lane Hotel, Piccadilly, London W1. Members of the public pay a nominal fee (£1) to attend and watch the final and also have the opportunity to participate in crosswords and word games. Full details are available from the sponsors, Collins Publishers, 8 Grafton Street, London W1X 3LA, or the NS *(Dept Collins Crosswords). Please enclose an SAE.*

ACROSS

4 One said to be dressed with diamonds, adorned like a reputed beauty (8)
10 Is prone, prettified, by centre of bed, being thus? (2 words, 8)
11 Old grimace: would be companion to beam, perhaps, given time? (3)
15 Dog of variable weight edged round two large bones? (6)
17 Duty of an exotic diet I'd change for British (4)
18 Peppers: these are possibly holy dispensing peace about time (10)
21 Leader of Boeotians too old when getting on rafts (6)
24 Start to tilt or cause initial turning effect (4)
25 It's black 'club' gathering here (among the trees?) (6)
27 Not good tempered but rude to all in bursts, being loveless (10)
29 Waste praise one time on Egyptian leader (4)
30 It's bad if held in riot? (This, if waved like an oar) (6)
35 Fat old bag, say, with metal ring for one in teeth? (3)
36 Point of needle resting in small glass tube containing a tiny measure of inoculative stuff? (8)
38 Chief, one in jug say, doesn't start to laugh (4)

DOWN

1 Uproar one fled from at, er, the last meeting (6)
2 No longer fancy show of force with blow (4)
3 It's no more used to make ship that's all right without it (3)
4 Sprinklers not used on plants in gusty April gales (10)
5 Language employed in Celtic antiquity (4)
6 Cannot be bothered with feathers found on head of avocet (5)
7 What Japanese bind round them, too big about the middle (3)
8 Hat from district of India: with time it's found round about (5)
9 Cheat potential sailors — mostly false about plan — giving them little bit of injection? (8)
12 What *he* might give *her* 'cos child's ready to be produced? (5)
14 Trustworthy but showing crossness in what can be quoted (10)
16 What's perhaps due's no longer customary (4)
19 Supposed you'ld have got a trick in this with a trump lead? I have! (8)
20 Beast leading with middle part fool found in trench (3)
22 One of those animals you'ld find in charming numbers (3)
23 Supposed power to deceive lady with love for one (4)
24 This tick covers you when fastened (5)
26 Greek layer of table, a male governor (6)
27 Outer cases of sweets, round, eaten by swingers (5)
28 Asia Minor resort: arms can't be involved (5)
30 Like some paper? See one with a twist among lines (4)
31 It carries the water — you might drop that! (4)
33 Bow string, a vital part of Hallé items for backing (3)
34 What female kangaroo has, namely for keeping one in (3)

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more past. I tried to see if there was a way through. There wasn't, but there was a police Range Rover, lights on, perched on the ridge. They don't drink Opal Hush anymore, or make movies like *A Canterbury Tale*. We settle for *The Edge of Darkness* instead. □

FOOD

Hearts and minds

Colin Spencer

OUR STATISTICS for coronary heart disease are horrifying. The following figures are those which at last made the Health Authority act, by launching the 'Look After Your Heart' campaign.

163,000 people died of coronary heart disease in 1985. Thirty-one one per cent of all men and 24 per cent of women die from this cause. It is the major cause of death before retirement in men and the second major cause, after cancer, for women. It strikes suddenly without warning in 60 per cent of cases. Deaths from CHD are higher in the north, Ireland, Scotland and Wales. The government's campaign has cost £2.5 million or 5.5p per head of the population — which contrasts shamefully with a similar campaign in Finland which worked out at 80p per head. All the above figures came from Eric Brunner of the splendidly radical London Food Commission. What did they tell the government and what do they tell us? It is clear that different messages are received.

The government has produced booklets and advertising material spreading the message of no smoking, a healthy diet and exercise. What is clear from the new statistics is that the underprivileged areas of the UK suffer more and that manual workers have a higher rate of death from coronary disease than blue-collar workers. The government have recognised this and are placing much of their advertising in tabloid newspapers and on TV. But there government involvement stops; for them two and two never make four. The factors behind malnutrition and disease are never scrutinised with either care or compassion. Instead we get the kind of remarks for which Edwina Currie is notorious.

Brunner mentions a Welsh survey which shows that manual workers are not ignorant of the risk factors. But the point he also makes is that there has been no research done on whether the healthy diet can actually be afforded by the low income groups. We know that the poor eat less fresh fruit and vegetables. But their intake has *declined* in the last ten years, while the more affluent sections of society have increased their consumption of these foods. Fresh fruit and vegetables not only supply vitamins and minerals but also dietary fibre; they are the only source of folic acid. A folate deficiency has been linked to spina bifida children.

There can be no doubt that the majority of the population in the UK has a diet which is inadequate. This fact is fudged by the government, not least because of its official policy on Recommended Daily Amounts (RDA) for vitamins and minerals. Compare the UK figures with both the USA and the USSR. For vitamin A, we have the same figure — 750 mcg — for an adult and a pregnant woman. The USA gives a figure of 1000 mcg for both, while the USSR gives for the adult 1500 mcg and for the pregnant woman 1750 mcg. For most of the minerals and half of the vitamins, we do not bother to give an RDA at all, while the USSR's estimates are generous and detailed. It is also clear by comparing the three tables of RDA, that some of what the USA and USSR consider as essential nutrients in whole cereals and fresh vegetables, we tend to dismiss as irrelevant to diet.

Last year's Food Commission's report — 'Tightening Belts' — suggested that food for a healthier diet would cost 35 per cent more. Because of many factors outside its control, a family living off supplementary benefit is forced into eating a diet of processed foods high in fats and salt. Low income groups tend not to think of food as either health-giving or not; they see food naturally as taken to ward off hunger pains or to keep the children quiet. A packet of crisps is more likely to stop the kids moaning than an apple. There are ten million people, one in three, who are obliged to eat and exist at little more than subsistence level. 'Tightening Belts' quotes cases like the single parent who denies herself food to buy necessities for her two children. Food in the household budget is a flexible item, unlike the fixed commodities of rent, rates, fuel and hire purchase: it will tend to be paid for with whatever is left in the purse.

So it is the poor who are, unsurprisingly, most at risk from CHD and other diseases linked with malnutrition. The government needs to tackle the real issues behind the decline in our health. Smokers will continue to refuse to believe that smoking can be bad for you so long as the government allows tobacco companies to advertise. There is no adequate labelling to show what a food contains nutritionally; consumers are thus left with either no information or deliberately fudged information. Which product contains the real raspberry? The one whose label says raspberry flavoured, or one which says raspberry flavour? (The former has some fruit in it as well as flavouring, the latter is completely synthetic.)

There is a simple answer to all this. What the government must do is to improve welfare benefit and housing conditions, while revising the official Recommended Daily Amounts, and subsidising the foods which are nutritionally wholesome. These are the real basics for good health. □

Weekend competition

No 2987 **Set by Norman Geras**

A recent advert in the *Guardian* announced the 'Cocal-Cola Lectureship in Retailing' at Edinburgh University. And we've also had the Smarties Award for Children's Fiction, the Second Cornhill Test Match, etc. More suggestions for apt or incongruous sponsorships, please, by Wednesday 19 August.

No 2984 **Set by Tim Hopkins**

Limericks encapsulating the history of the world.

Report **By Gray Dorn**

No doubt because word quickly got round that I was back, this was the biggest entry in *NS* history. A fiver each. None of you are optimistic. Me neither.

From the primitive, pre-social horde
Through the rule of the priest and the lord
To the bourgeoisie's sway
Of our own present day
There's been little enough to applaud.

BASIL RANSOME-DAVIES

It's a subject too big to *ad lib* on,
But since the first babe had its bib on,
All men have been wallies;
Misfortunes, crimes, follies —
That's history, according to Gibbon.

STANLEY J. SHARPLESS

The Big Bang, the boffins propose,
Produced nucleotides of ribose.
The genetic results
Include Reagan and Schultz.
What happens next, God alone knows.

DEREK DUNN

First plants, and then fishes then man
Evolved from the sea, then began
The human production
That caused the destruction
That will send the whole lot down the pan.

KATIE MALLETT

The rafters are starting to creak,
The fate of God's Building looks bleak,
But what can you expect
If you blithely erect
Such a complex in less than a week?

HAZEL ARCHARD

Darwinian progress was callous,
The triumph of tooth, claw and phallus,
But the rise of humanity
Brought reason and sanity,
And H-bombs, and Tarbuck, and *Dallas*.

GEORGE SIMMERS

Whatever led God to conceive
A soap starring Adam and Eve?
Though we liked dinosaurs
And were thrilled by the wars
They're dropping it soon, I believe.

KEITH NORMAN

The creatures who first broke the rules,
Went on to evolve, making tools.
'Twasn't breeding like rabbits
But other bad habits
Which wiped them all out. Silly fools!

M. E. AULT

There once was a Being who toyed
With a world that was totally void:
He filled it with life,
Gave Adam a wife
And then added figleaves and Freud.

NAOMI MARKS

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Take me to Your Leader
by, Moanin Minnie
The newly-formed Merged Movement of Moderate Middlegrounders is attracting the support of disgruntled Tories....
MY COLLEAGUES AND I WISH TO JOIN YOU IN THE FIGHT AGAINST THATCHERISM
BIFFO
WALKIES
TEDDY
WELCOME
MMMM
SO WHAT TACTICS SHALL WE USE AGAINST THATCHER?
I INTEND TO TUT-TUT HER
I SHALL WEAR A SCEPTICALLY AMUSED EXPRESSION
I SHALL TRY VERY HARD TO BE CHURLISH AND PETULANT
DO YOU GET THE FEELING THE PURITY OF THE MOVEMENT IS BEING SULLIED?
PYMMIE
TEDDY
MMMM
WE MUST MAKE A STAND
AND SO...
JOHN MUNNION
WE'VE FORMED A MILITANT WING
MMMM
MMMMM

Chess

ON A NUMBER of occasions I have been driven to ask whether the current generation of Soviet GMs — excepting the exceptional duo, Kasparov and Karpov — are quite up to the standard of their predecessors. Clearly this is a question that must also be under debate in Moscow. Earlier this year the Russians held a televised tournament between an older team, a young team, and a team which, if not exactly middle-aged, was betwixt the other two in years. The muster of the top five boards in the 8-man teams was: **Golden Oldies**: Tal, Smyslov, Polugaievsky, Tukmakov, Geller; **Young Ones:** Kasparov, Sokolov, Bareyev, Chernin, Salov; **Middle Men:** Beliavsky, Vaganian, Dolmatov, Psakhis, Lputian.

Did the event bear out my things-ain't-what-they-used-to-be allegation? Just see how one of the veterans pounces on a youthful adversary who innocently strays into a patch of palaeolithic opening theory!

Geller-Salov, USSR Telematch 1987. Ruy Lopez.
1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bb5 g6 4. c3 a6 5. Ba4 d6 6. d4 Bd7 7. 0-0 Bg7 8. dxe5 Nxe5? Known to be inferior to 8 . . . dxe5 well before Salov was born (1964). **9. Nxe5 dxe5 10. F4! Ne7?** His coaches had better show Salov the games of the great AVRO 1938 tournament, in particular Fine-Alekhine: 10 . . . Bxa4 11. Qxa4+ Qd7 12. Qxd7+ Kxd7 13. fxe5 Ke6 14. Bf4. The verdict was that recapturing on e5 is too time-consuming, but after 14 . . . Rf8 15. Nd2 Bxe5 16. Nb3 Bxf4 17. Rxf4 b6 18. a4 maybe Black can hold out with 18 . . . a5 instead of Alekhine's 18 . . . Ke5?. **11. f5! gxf5** Passive defence with 11 . . . f6 is utterly miserable — 12. Be3 Bxa4 13. Qxa4+ Qd7 14. Qxd7+ Kxd7 15. c4 Rad8 16. Nc3 Keres-Goldenov, Moscow 1952. **12. exf5 Nd5 13. Qxd5 Bxa4 14. Qxb7 Bb5 15. f6! Bxf6 16. c4 Rb8** As 16 . . . Bxc4 fails to 17. Qc6+ Black has no defence to the dual threats of cxb5 and Qf3. **17. Qf3 Qd4+ 18. Be3 Qxc4 19. Na3 Qe6 20. Nxb5 Rxb5 21. Qxf6 Qxf6 22. Rxf6** and Salov, a piece down for nothing much, squirmed a bit before resigning at move 30.

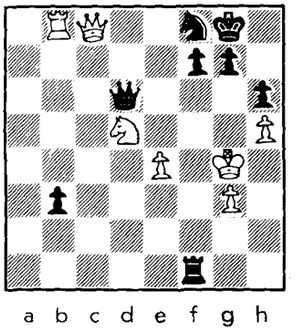
However, to put things in perspective, that was one of only two games that the veterans won in the whole of the double-round event. The young team won, the intermediate team finished in the middle, and the senior side were convincingly last. But am I going to be convinced by that, when the real question is how the younger GMs would have fared against Tal, Spassky, Petrosian and Stein in *their* prime? Or perhaps the real question is: Am I going to be able to escape from this '60s nostalgia?

Another decade which we must also accept has passed is the period during which Tony Miles was top board for England — from the Haifa Olympiad of 1976 to Dubai in 1986. Tony Miles was the first English player to achieve the Grandmaster title and so far the only British player to win the World Junior Championship. He also managed to fit in a stint as *NS* chess columnist, notable for his harsh (some would say ungrateful — and worse) criticisms of tournament organisers and for the way he tested readers by giving them tough positions from tournament games to sort out. Although too independent a character to be an ideal team member, he was an extremely dependable first board. No longer an automatic choice for top board, he would still be an asset to the English team if he were prepared to go on playing for it. But he isn't, which is why I'm writing this in valedictory style.

We've just got room for one of the easier points Miles scored for England.

Miles-Browne, Lucerne Olympiad 1982. Queen's Gambit.
1. Nf3 c5 2. c4 Nf6 3. Nc3 e6 4. e3 Nc6 5. d4 d5 6. dxc5 Miles, who has a penchant for experimental openings (remember 1 . . . a6 against Karpov at Skara 1980), is playing a sort of Queen's Gambit Accepted with colours reversed. **Bxc5 7. a3 a6 8. b4 Ba7 9. Bb2 0-0 10. Rc1 d4?** This would have been fine if cxd5 exd5 had already been played. **11. exd4 Nxd4 12. c5! Nxf3+ 13. Qxf3 Bd7 14. Bd3 Bc6 15. Ne4 Nxe4 16. Bxe4 Qc7 17. 0-0 Rad8?** An instinct for self-preservation should have prompted 17 . . . Bxe4. Perhaps he didn't like to exchange white-squared Bishops because his black-squared Bishop is so obviously inferior to White's. **18. Bxh7+! Kxh7 19. Qh5+ Kg8 20. Bxg7!** Just like the celebrated Lasker-Bauer double Bishop sacrifice. Incidentally, you may care to work out why Miles didn't play the sacrifice on move 17. **Kxg7 21. Qg5+ Kh8 22. Qf6+ Kg8 23. Rc4 1-0.**

From the Diagram: White to play and win.



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☐ On a hot-air hand dryer in a House of Commons gents, a wag has placed a notice: 'Press here for a message from your MP.' — *Yorkshire Evening Post* (L. T. Annal)

☐ We once visited an elderly Countess who served us supper consisting of a huge loaf, a dish of butter and a tin of golden syrup, washed down with large tots of gin — which indicates that there is no social stigma attached to what used to be the food of the poor, provided that you serve it with a bit of panache! — *Saga* (Mary Manners Simpson)

☐ A high-flying northern whizzkid is trying to persuade mourners to pep up funerals with memorial balloons instead of floral wreaths. 'They're very tasteful, black and at only £2 last far longer than flowers,' says 23-year old Andy Egan. — *People* (George Moor)

☐ About 20,000 white collar civil servants are estimated to be receiving family income supplement of whom nearly 300 are employed by the DHSS, Mr Nicholas Scott, Social Security Minister, said in a Commons written reply. — *Daily Telegraph* (James Scott)

☐ Surely the whole purpose of education is to enable one to complete *The Times* crossword unaided? — *The Times* (Hugh Cockerell)

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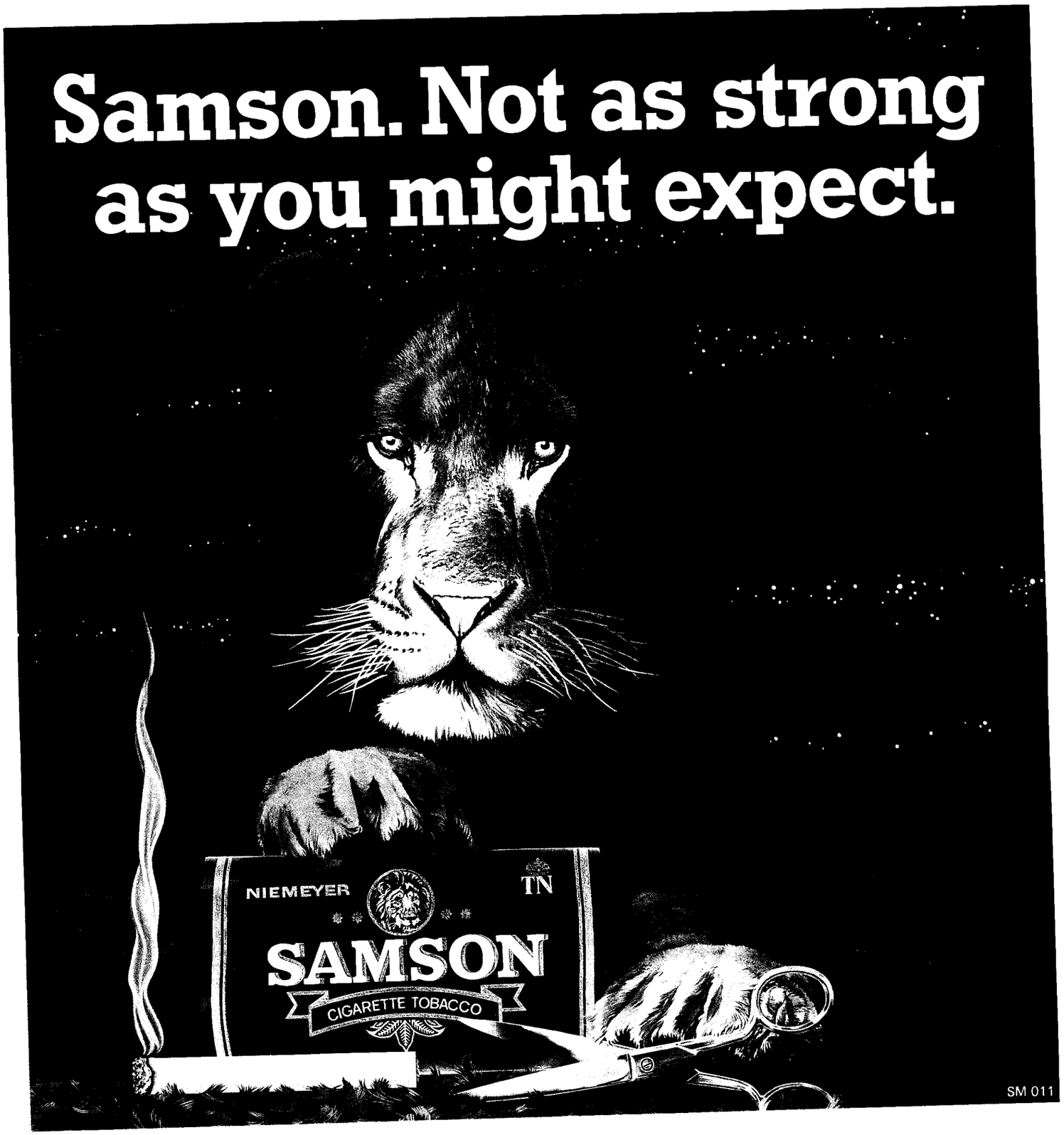

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